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The Choice of Books

By

Charles F. Richardson

Professor of English in Dartmouth College
Author of "A History of American Literature," etc.

Authorized Edition, Revised

Together with

Suggestions for Libraries

Selected Lists of Books of Reference, History, Biography, and
Literature, with the Best Current Editions
Notes and Prices

G. P. Putnam's Sons
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1905

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For Revised Edition

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PREFACE

THE chapters composing this handbook were originally printed as weekly contributions to a literary newspaper in 1880 and 1881, and were gathered into book form in the latter year. An English reissue and a Russian translation soon followed. Owing to an accidental loss of copyright the many subsequent American editions, bearing various imprints, have been beyond the author's control; but he has taken pleasure in the fact that the treatise has apparently continued to be helpful, notwithstanding the later appearance of many excellent works of similar purpose.

In the present issue many new pages have been added, while the less essential portions of the earlier editions have been dropped. The author has preferred, however, to retain the general plan and method unchanged, as having proved to be of practical service. Direct usefulness has been kept in mind, rather than the endeavour to present a sheaf of essays concerning literary themes.

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With this end in view, large use has been made, as before, of citations from the best authorities, old and new, so that the work is a sort of treasury of wise thoughts on books and reading.

"Here then,"—in the words of 2 Maccabees, xxxiii.,—"we will begin the narration; let this be enough by way of a preface; for it is a foolish thing to make a long prologue and to be short in the story itself."

DARTMOUTH COLLEGE,
September 1, 1905.

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The Choice of Books

THE MOTIVE OF READING

"OF making many books there is no end," said the wise man of three thousand years ago; and he added the equally true statement that "much study"—that is, much reading—"is a weariness of the flesh." A fourteenth century commentator, in considering this text, drew the conclusion that no books may rightly be read save "the bokis of hooli scripture," and "other bokis, that ben nedeful to the understonding of hooli scripture." Modern readers, reared outside the close atmosphere of mediæval cloisters, are of course not so narrow in their interpretation of this text; but all will agree that a wise choice must be made from the great stores of literature that the ages have accumulated, from the days of papyrus scrolls and birch-bark writings to these times, when scarcely any country town is without its library.

It has been estimated—of course by a rough system of guesswork—that the total number of volumes in the world is more than three billion, or two per capita. Mr. Gladstone once said that we must "bow our heads to the inevitable: the day of encyclopædic learning has gone by . . . A vast, even a bewildering prospect is before us, for evil or for good; but for good, unless it be our own fault, far more than evil." Indeed, this venerable book-lover felt that he would like to do something to "prevent the population of Great Britain from being extruded, some centuries hence, into the surrounding waters by the exorbitant dimensions of their own libraries." Reversing the figure, Felix Adler likens book-making and periodical-making to a flood: "The present condition in literature is like that which prevailed, or is said according to the Bible to have prevailed, on earth immediately after Noah entered the ark. A deluge has set in. It rains and rains books and reviews and magazines and pamphlets; and then there are the newspapers. The flood rises higher and higher. It comes into our houses, empties itself on our bookshelves and loads our tables. We are up to our necks in it, and in alarm we cry that we shall drown!

. . . The deluge is upon us; but the rock of safety is at hand. The rock of safety is the world's best literature, the things that have been approved in the experience of generations."

Literature is the written record of valuable thought, having other than a merely technical purpose. It is the preserved sum-total of the best ideas of the world's noblest men and women. It is the tale of "that common humanity whose sorrowings and sinnings, whose hopes and joys and little triumphs, constitute the great story which all the pens of time have tried to tell—the story which leads back and sets man face to face with the Undiscoverable."[1] Of all existing occupations, therefore, none is better than that of good reading, wisely to be used. It is treasure laid up for heaven, for the mind endures when the body is scattered dust. Literature is more real and more lasting than stocks and bonds, statues and buildings. "The world of the imagination," says Lowell, "is not the world of abstraction and nonentity, as some conceive, but a world formed out of chaos by a sense of the beauty that is in man and the earth on which he dwells. . . . Every book we read may be made a round in the ever-lengthening ladder by which we climb to knowledge and to that temperance and serenity of mind which, as it is the ripest fruit of wisdom, is also the sweetest. . . . The riches of scholarship, the benignities of literature, defy fortune and outlive calamity. They are beyond the reach of thief or moth or rust. As they cannot be inherited, so they cannot be alienated."

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[1] E. Hough.

"The grandest aim of imaginative art," says Ruskin, "is to give men noble grounds for noble emotion." Literature is but one of the imaginative arts; and it is that art which presupposes a development of culture, which has been aptly defined as an "interest in the best things said and written in the world." [1]

The best things are the remnant, the chosen few, the selected minority. There were nine sibylline books, then three were thrown away, then again three, but the remaining ones were more valuable than the nine. Literature, says John Morley, "consists of all the books — and they are not so many—where moral truth and human passion are touched with a certain largeness, sanity, and attraction of form."

More and more, therefore, is there need of

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[1] The *Evening Sun*.

James Russell Lowell's advice: "The first lesson in reading well is that which teaches us to distinguish between literature and merely printed matter. The choice lies wholly with ourselves."

"We are now," says Disraeli, "in want of an art to teach how books are to be read, rather than to read them; such an art is practicable."

The very first thing to be remembered by him who would study the art of reading is that nothing can take the place of personal enthusiasm and personal work. However wise may be the friendly adviser, and however full and perfect the chosen handbook of reading, neither can do more than to stimulate and suggest. Nothing can take the place of a direct familiarity with books themselves. To *know* one good book well is better than to know something *about* a hundred good books, at second hand. The taste for reading and the habit of reading must always be developed from within; they can never be given from without.

All plans and systems of reading, then, should be taken, as far as possible, into one's heart of hearts, and be made a part of his own mind and thought. Unless this can be done, they are worse than useless. Dr. McCosh says: "The book to read is not the one that thinks for you, but the one which makes you think." It is plain, then, that a "course of reading" may be a great good or a great evil, according to its use. Bishop Alonzo Potter, in his day one of the most judicious of literary helpers, offered to readers this sound piece of advice: "Do not be so enslaved by any system or course of study as to think it may not be altered." However conscious one may be of his own deficiencies, and however he may feel the need of outside aid, he should never permit his own independence and self-respect to be obliterated. "He who reads incessantly," says Milton,

> "and to his reading brings not
> A spirit and judgment equal or superior,
> Uncertain and unsettled still remains,
> Deep versed in books, but shallow in himself."

The general agreement of intelligent people as to the merit of an author or the worth of a book is, of course, to be accepted until one finds some valid reason for reversing it. But nothing is to be gained by pretending to like what one really dislikes, or to enjoy what one does not find profitable, or even intelligible. If a reader is not honest and sincere in this matter, there is small hope for him. The lowest taste may be cultivated and improved, and radically changed; but pretence and artificiality can never grow into anything better. They must be wholly rooted out at the start. If you dislike Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and greatly enjoy a trashy story, say so with sincerity and sorrow, if occasion requires, and hope and work for a reversal of your taste. "It 's guid to be honest and true," says Burns, and nowhere is honesty more needed than here.

For honesty's sake, accordingly, let us grant at the start that the busiest reader must leave unread all but a mere fraction of the good books in the world. The reading of a book a fortnight, or say twenty-five books a year, is quite as much as the average reader can possibly achieve — a rate at which only 1250 books could be read in half a century. Since this is so, he must be very thoughtless or very timid who feels any shame in confessing that he is wholly ignorant of a great many books. Be not appalled at the thought of the thousands of volumes issued yearly, or the millions in libraries; but be ashamed only of your own abandonment of time that rightly belongs to reading. On the other hand, none but a very superficial and conceited reader will venture to express surprise at the deficiencies of others, when a little thought would make his own so clearly manifest. In Cowper's words:

> "Knowledge is proud that he has learned so much;
> Wisdom is humble that he knows no more."

THE READING HABIT

THERE are some persons who are so fortunate as to be unable to tell when they formed the habit of reading; who find it a constant and ever-increasing advantage and pleasure, their whole lives long; and who will not lay it down so long as they live. Their youth and old age are so bound up in the reading habit that, if questioned as to its first inception and probable end, they can only reply, like Dimple-chin and Grizzled-face, in Mr. Stedman's pretty poem of "Toujours Amour": "Ask some younger lass than I"; "Ask some older sage than I." Happy are those whose early surroundings thus permit them unconsciously to associate with books; whose parents and friends surround them with good reading; and whose time is so apportioned, in childhood and youth, as to permit them to give a fair share of it to reading, as well as to study in school, on the one hand, and physical labour, on the other. It is plain that a great duty and responsibility thus rests upon the parents and guardians and teachers of the young, at the very outset. It is theirs to furnish the books, and to stimulate and suggest, in every wise way, the best methods of reading.

Just where, in this early formation of the reading habit, absolute direction should end and advice begin, is a matter which the individual parent or guardian must decide for himself, in large measure. Perhaps there is greater danger of too much direction than of too much suggestion. It is well to give the young reader, in great part, the privilege of forming his own plans and making his own choice. Of this promotion of self-development Herbert Spencer says: "In education the process of self-development should be encouraged to the fullest extent. Children should be led to make their own investigations, and to draw their own inferences. They should be *told* as little as possible, and induced to *discover* as much as possible. Humanity has progressed solely by self-instruction; and that to achieve the best results each mind must progress somewhat after the same fashion, is continually proved by the marked success of self-made men. Those who have been brought up under the ordinary school-drill, and have carried away with them the idea that education is practicable only in that style, will think it hopeless to make children their own teachers. If, however, they will call to mind that the all-important knowledge of surrounding objects which a child gets in its early years is got without help; if they will remember that the child is self-taught in the use of its mother's tongue; if they will estimate the amount of that experience of life, that out-of-school wisdom which every boy gathers for himself; if they will mark the unusual intelligence of the uncared-for London gamin, as shown in all directions in which his faculties have been tasked; if, further, they will think how many minds have struggled up unaided, not only through the mysteries of our irrationally-planned curriculum, but through hosts of other obstacles besides, they will find it a not unreasonable conclusion that if the subjects be put before him in right order and right form, any pupil of ordinary capacity will surmount his successive difficulties with but little assistance. Who indeed can watch the ceaseless observation and inquiry and inference going on in a child's mind, or listen to its acute remarks on matters within the range of its faculties, without perceiving that these powers which it manifests, if brought to bear systematically upon any studies within the same range, would readily master them without help? This need for perpetual telling is the result of our stupidity, not of the child's. We drag it away from the facts in which it is interested, and which it is actively assimilating of itself; we put before it facts far too complex for it to understand, and therefore distasteful to it; finding that it will not voluntarily acquire these facts, we thrust them into its mind by force of threats and punishment; by thus denying the knowledge it craves, and cramming it with knowledge it cannot digest, we produce a morbid state of its faculties, and a consequent disgust for knowledge in general; and when as a result partly of the stolid indifference we have brought on, and partly of still continued unfitness in its studies, the child can understand nothing without explanation, and becomes a mere passive recipient of our instruction, we infer that education must necessarily be carried on thus. Having by our method induced helplessness, we straightway make the helplessness a reason for our method."

After making all needed deductions from the somewhat impatient spirit in which Mr. Spencer here speaks, it can hardly be questioned that the young reader — and most of these suggestions apply equally well to those few who begin to read later in life—will do much for himself; and that, on the whole, he stands in greater need of a judicious guide and helper than of a rigorous ruler and taskmaster. Of course, if he lacks both guidance and government, the latter is better than nothing; and there are times when only stern commandment will avail. But the rule should be made in accordance with the large purpose of helpfulness. The reading habit is a growth, a development, not a creation; and all measures for its cultivation, whether from without or within, should be made with this fact in mind. And where strict and even stern regulation is necessary, the direction will be most profitable that best succeeds in causing itself to be assimilated in the mind of the governed, as a part of that mind, and not as a foreign addition.

The normal child, under right surroundings, amuses itself " in books, or work, or healthful play," now one, now another. Whether the reader, aided by wise counsellors, be young or old, he should soon become familiar with the advantage of making his reading a part of all his daily life.

As regards children's reading, parents and teachers should use the "presumption of brains." Take it for granted that they like the good. Children dislike to be "talked down to," and it is as easy to interest them in a Waverley novel as in a "Henty book." "I can conceive," says Lowell, "of no healthier reading for a boy, or a girl either, than Scott's novels, or Cooper's." A pleasant course in English history may be based solely upon Scott's novels, as is shown by the following table, in which each title is followed by the approximate date and the name of the reigning monarch:

Count Robert of Paris	1090	William Rufus.
The Betrothed	1187	Henry II.
The Talisman	1193	Richard I.
Ivanhoe	1194	Richard I.
Castle Dangerous	1306–7	Edward I.
The Fair Maid of Perth	1402	Henry IV.
Quentin Durward	1470	Edward IV.
Anne of Geierstein	1474–7	Edward IV.
The Monastery	1559	Elizabeth.
The Abbot	1568	Elizabeth.
Kenilworth	1575	Elizabeth.
The Laird's Jock	1600	Elizabeth.
The Fortunes of Nigel	1620	James I.
A Legend of Montrose	1645–6	James I.
Woodstock	1652	Commonwealth.
Peveril of the Peak	1660	Charles II.
Old Mortality	1679–90	Charles II. William and Mary.

The Pirate	1700	William III. and Anne.
My Aunt Margaret's Mirror	1700	William III.
The Bride of Lammermoor	1700	William III.
The Black Dwarf	1708	Anne.
Rob Roy	1715	George I.
The Heart of Midlothian	1736-51	George II.
Waverley	1745	George II.
The Highland Widow	1755	George II.
The Surgeon's Daughter	1750-70	George II. and III.
Guy Mannering	1750-70	George II. and III.
The Two Drovers	1765	George III.
Redgauntlet	1770	George III.
The Tapestried Chamber	1780	George III.
The Antiquary	1798	George III.
St. Ronan's Well	1800	George III.

Mr. Ruskin, too, has spoken of the duty of brightening the beginnings of education, and of the evils of cramming, against which, happily, the tide of the best contemporary thought is now setting strongly,—never to ebb, let us hope. "Make your children," he says, "happy in their youth; let distinction come to them, if it will, after well-spent and well-remembered years; but let them now break and eat the bread of heaven with gladness and singleness of heart, and send portions to them for whom nothing is prepared; and so heaven send you its grace, before meat, and after it." Of the necessity of making attractive the beginnings of reading, Edward Everett

Hale says: "In the first place, we must make this business agreeable. Whichever avenue we take into the maze must be one of the pleasant avenues, or else, in a world which the good God has made very beautiful, the young people will go a-skating, or a-fishing, or a-swimming, or a-voyaging, and not a-reading, and no blame to them." How much can be done by others in making the literary path pleasant is known to the full by those whose first steps were guided therein by a wise father, or mother, or teacher, or friend. How strongly the lack of the helpful hand is felt, none who has missed it will need to be told.

But those who must be their own helpers need not be one whit discouraged. The history of the world is full of bright examples of the value of self-training, as shown by the subsequent success won as readers, and writers, and workers in every department of life, by those who apparently lacked both books to read and time to read them, or even the candle wherewith to light the printed page. It would be easy to fill this whole series of chapters with accounts of the way in which the reading habit has been acquired and followed in the face of every obstacle. A single bit of personal reminiscence may be taken as the type of thousands. It is the story told by Robert Collyer, who worked his way from the anvil, in a little English town, up to a commanding position among American preachers. "Do you want to know," he asked, "how I manage to talk to you in this simple Saxon? I will tell you. I read Bunyan, Crusoe, and Goldsmith when I was a boy, morning, noon, and night. All the rest was task-work; these were my delight, with the stories in the Bible, and with Shakespeare, when at last the mighty master came within our doors. The rest were as senna to me. These were like a well of pure water, and this is the first step I seem to have taken of my own free will toward the pulpit. . . . I took to these as I took to milk, and, without the least idea what I was doing, got the taste of simple words into the very fibre of my nature. There was day-school for me until I was eight years old, and then I had to turn in and work thirteen hours a day. . . . From the days when we used to spell out Crusoe and old Bunyan there had grown up in me a devouring hunger to read books. It made small matter what they were, so they were books. Half a volume of an old encyclopædia came along—the first I had ever seen. How many times I went through that I cannot even guess. I remember that I read some old reports of the Missionary Society with the greatest delight. There were chapters in them about China and Labrador. Yet I think it is in reading as it is in eating: when the first hunger is over you begin to be a little critical, and will by no means take to garbage if you are of a wholesome nature. And I remember this because it touches this beautiful valley of the Hudson. I could not go home for the Christmas of 1839, and was feeling very sad about it all, for I was only a boy; and sitting by the fire, an old farmer came in and said: 'I notice thou 's fond o' reading, so I brought thee summat to read.' It was Irving's *Sketch Book*. I had never heard of the work. I went at it, and was 'as them that dream.' No such delight had touched me since the old days of Crusoe. I saw the Hudson and the Catskills, took poor Rip at once into my heart, as everybody has, pitied Ichabod while I laughed at him, thought the old Dutch feast a most admirable thing, and long before I was through, all regret at my lost Christmas had gone down the wind, and I had found out there are books and books. That vast hunger to read never left me. If there was no candle, I poked my head down to the fire; read while I was eating, blowing the bellows, or walking from one place to another. I could read and walk four miles an hour. The world centred in books. There was no thought in my mind of any good to come out of it; the good lay in the reading. I had no more idea of being a minister than you elder men who were boys then, in this town, had that I should be here to-night to tell this story. Now, give a boy a passion like this for anything, books or business, painting or farming, mechanism or music, and you give him thereby a lever to lift his world, and a patent of nobility, if the thing he does is noble. There were two or three of my mind about books. We became companions, and gave the roughs a wide berth. The books did their work, too, about that drink, and fought the devil with a finer fire. I remember while I was yet a lad reading Macaulay's great essay on Bacon, and I could grasp its wonderful beauty. There has been no time when I have not felt sad that there should have been no chance for me at a good education and training. I miss it every day, but such chances as were left lay in that everlasting hunger to still be reading. I was tough as leather, and could do the double stint, and so it was that, all unknown to myself, I was as one that soweth good seed in his field.''

With young or old, there is no such helper toward the reading habit as the cultivation of this warm and undying feeling of the friendliness of books,—in which subject Frederick Denison Maurice found enough to write a whole volume. If a parent or other guide seems but a taskmaster; if his rules are those of a statute-book, and his society like that of an officer of the law, there is small hope that his help can be made either serviceable or profitable. But with the growth of the friendly feeling comes a state of mind which renders all things possible. When one book has become a friend and fellow, the world has grown that much broader and more beautiful. Petrarch said of his books, considered as his friends: "I have friends whose society is extremely agreeable to me; they are of all ages, and of every country. They have distinguished themselves both in the cabinet and in the field, and obtained high honours for their knowledge of the sciences. It is easy to gain access to them, for they are always at my service, and I admit them to my company, and dismiss them from it, whenever I please. They are never troublesome, but immediately answer every question I ask them. Some relate to me the events of the past ages, while others reveal to me the secrets of nature. Some teach me how to live, and others how to die. Some, by their vivacity, drive away my cares and exhilarate my spirits, while others give fortitude to my mind and teach me the important lesson how to restrain my desires, and to depend wholly on myself. They open to me, in short, the various avenues of all the arts and sciences, and upon their information I safely rely in all emergencies."

Literature, from Cicero to Andrew Lang, is full of such tributes to the friendship of books. Wordsworth's oft-quoted lines were made more familiar in America by their long-continued use as the motto of a literary newspaper:

"Dreams, books, are each a world; and books, we know,
Are a substantial world, both pure and good.
Round these, with tendrils strong as flesh and blood,
Our pastime and our happiness will grow."

"In my study," quaintly said Sir William Waller, "I am sure to converse with none but wise men; but abroad it is impossible for me to avoid the society of fools." Sir John Herschel called books "the best society in every period of history": "Were I to pray for a taste which should stand me in stead under every variety of circumstances, and be a source of happiness and cheerfulness to me during life, and a shield against its ills, however things might go amiss, and the world frown upon me, it would be a taste for reading. Give a man this taste, and the means of gratifying it, and you can hardly fail of making him a happy man; unless, indeed, you put into his hands a most perverse selection of books. You place him in contact with the best society in every period of history—with the wisest, the wittiest, the tenderest, the bravest, and the purest characters who have adorned humanity. You make him a denizen of all nations, a contemporary of all ages. The world has been created for him." Among his books, William Ellery Channing could say: "In the best books, great men talk to us, with us, and give us their most precious thoughts. Books are the voices of the distant and the dead. Books are the true levellers. They give to all who will faithfully use them the society and the presence of the best and greatest of our race. No matter how poor I am; no matter though the prosperous of my own time will not enter my obscure dwelling, if learned men and poets will enter and take up their abode under my roof,—if Milton will cross my threshold to sing to me of Paradise; and Shakespeare open to me the world of imagination and the workings of the human heart; and Franklin enrich me with his practical wisdom, I shall not pine for intellectual companionship, and I may become a cultivated man, though excluded from what is called the best society in the place where I live. . . . Nothing can supply the place of books. They are cheering and soothing companions in solitude, illness, or affliction. The wealth of both continents could not compensate for the good they impart. Let every man, if possible, gather some good books under his roof, and obtain access for himself and family to some social library. Almost any luxury should be sacrificed to this." And one cannot wonder that Fénelon said: "If the crowns of all the kingdoms of the empire were laid down at my feet in exchange for my books and my love of reading, I would spurn them all"; or that the historian Gibbon wrote: "A taste for books is the pleasure and glory of my life. I would not exchange it for the glory of the Indies."

The same thought has been phrased in a hundred different ways: Addison declared that

"Books are the legacies that a great genius leaves to mankind, which are delivered down from generation to generation, as presents to the posterity of those who are yet unborn"; and a forgotten but wholesome American writer, George S. Hillard, concisely reminded us that "Books are the friends of the friendless, and a library is the home of the homeless." All these words of wise readers show that he who rightly cultivates the reading habit not only can have the best of friends ever at hand, but can at length say with all modesty, if he reads aright and remembers well: "My mind to me a kingdom is."

WHAT BOOKS TO READ

"WHAT books shall I read?" This question virtually includes in its answer the consideration of the whole world of letters, and is of such manifest importance that no individual utterance, however sincere and competent, can entirely cover the ground. Different tastes and needs call for different suggestions. In this chapter, therefore, I prefer to express my own conclusions principally in the words of mightier men.

Coming thus definitely to the choice of particular books, we find that only the smaller and pettier guides presume to mark out definite courses of reading. The master minds never forget that books were made for readers, not readers for books. "The best rule of reading," says Emerson, "will be a method from nature, and not a mechanical one of hours and pages. It holds each student to a pursuit of his native aim, instead of a desultory miscellany. Let him read what is proper to him, and not waste his memory on a crowd of mediocrities. As whole nations have derived their culture from a single book—as the Bible has been the literature as well as the religion of large portions of Europe—as Hafiz was the eminent genius of the Persians, Confucius of the Chinese, Cervantes of the Spaniards; so, perhaps, the human mind would be a gainer if all the secondary writers were lost—say, in England, all but Shakespeare, Milton, and Bacon—through the profounder study so drawn to those wonderful minds. With this plot of his own genius, let the student read one, or let him read many, he will read advantageously."

As regards the Bible as the only book, it may be noted that another poet—Joaquin Miller in his Californian mountain home—is willing to make it his only printed library. "Books, books," said he to a visitor, "what's the good of them? The book of Nature and the Bible are books enough for me."

The advantage of following the common consent of the best critics, as to what are the world's best books, is further pressed by Mr. Emerson when he urges us to "be sure to read no mean books"; and when, in more definite language, he lays down his three well-known rules: "1. Never read any book that is not a year old. 2. Never read any but famed books. 3. Never read any but what you like; or, in Shakespeare's phrase—

> ' No profit goes where is no pleasure ta'en ;
> In brief, sir, study what you most affect.' "

The first of these rules is clearly not to be followed in every case. It is, indeed, modified by the third rule, which must sometimes take precedence of it. But there can be no question that the great majority of readers are in much more danger of wasting their time over books that are new, than of losing sight of contemporary literature through an exclusive devotion to the standard books of past ages.

Carlyle says that all books are to be divided into two classes, sheep and goats. " Readers are not aware of the fact," he says, " but a fact it is of daily increasing magnitude, and already of terrible importance to readers, that their first grand necessity in reading is to be vigilantly, conscientiously select; and to know everywhere that books, like human souls, are actually divided into what we may call sheep and goats—the latter put inexorably on the left hand of the judge, and tending, every goat of them, at all moments, whither we know; and much to be avoided; and, if possible, ignored by all sane creatures."

Ruskin further and more minutely marks the same distinction by noting the difference between books of the hour and books of all time. "All books," says he, "are divisible into two classes, the books of the hour, and the books of all time. Mark this distinction—it is not one of quality only. It is not merely the bad book that does not last, and the good one that does. It is a distinction of species. There are good books for the hour, and good books for all time; bad books for the hour, and bad ones for all time. I must define the two kinds before I go farther. The good book of the hour, then,—I do not speak of the bad ones,—is simply the useful or pleasant talk of some person whom you cannot otherwise converse with, printed for you. . . . These bright accounts of travels; good-humoured and witty discussions of question; lively or pathetic story-telling in the form of novel; firm fact-telling by the real agents concerned in the events of passing history; all these books of the hour, multiplying among us as education becomes more general, are a peculiar characteristic and possession of the present age; we ought to be entirely thankful for them, and entirely ashamed of ourselves if we make no good use of them. But we make the worst possible use if we allow them to usurp the place of true books; for, strictly speaking, they are not books at all, but merely letters or newspapers in good print. Our friend's letter may be delightful, or necessary, to-day; whether worth keeping or not, is to be considered. The newspaper may be entirely proper at breakfast time; but assuredly it is not reading for all day. So, though bound up in a volume, the long letter which gives you so pleasant an account of the inns, and roads, and weather last year at such a place, or which tells you that amusing story, or gives you the real circumstances of such and such events, however valuable for occasional reference, may not be, in the real sense of the word, a 'book' at all, nor, in the real sense, to be 'read.' A book is essentially not a talked thing, but a written thing; and written, not with the view of mere communication, but of permanence. The book of talk is printed only because its author cannot speak to thousands of people at once; if he could, he would—the volume is mere multiplication of his voice. You cannot talk to your friend in India; if you could, you would; you write instead: that is mere conveyance of voice. But a book is written, not to multiply the voice merely, not to carry it merely, but to preserve it. The author has something to say which he perceives to be true and useful, or helpfully beautiful. So far as he knows, no one has yet said it; so far as he knows, no one else can say it; he is bound to say it, clearly and melodiously if he may, clearly, at all events. In the sum of his life he finds this to be the thing, or group of things, manifest to him; this the piece of true knowledge, or sight, which his share of sunshine and earth has permitted him to seize. He would fain set it down for ever; engrave it on rock, if he could; saying, ‘ This is the best of me; for the rest, I ate, and drank, and slept, loved, and hated, like another; my life was as the vapour, and is not; but this I saw and knew; this, if anything of mine, is worth your memory.’ That is his ‘ writing ’; it is, in his small human way, and with whatever degree of true inspiration is in him, his inscription, or scripture. That is a ‘ Book.’ ”

The real value of any book, to a particular reader, is to be measured by its serviceableness to that reader. “ My opinion ’s this,” says a character in a contemporary novel: “ Look, now, these books, from the lowest to the topmost shelf, row above row—you can read ’em all through, and be as stupid and even stupider after it than you were before. One does n't grow wise from books, but from the life one lives." "You should not," declares a recent aphorist, "read books to forget life, but to understand it more fully and enjoy it more keenly." We ought to get sustenance, and not a mere tickling of the intellectual palate, from "the dainties that are bred in a book."

"There is a literature of knowledge, and a literature of power," says De Quincey; and knowledge that can never be transmuted into power becomes mere intellectual rubbish. The choice of books would be greatly aided if the reader, in taking up a volume, would always ask himself just why he is going to read it, and of what service it is to be to him. This question, if sincerely put and truthfully answered, is pretty sure to lead him to the great books—or at least to the books that are great for him.

Homer, Plutarch, and Plato; Virgil, Cicero, and Tacitus; Dante, Tasso, and Petrarch; Cervantes; à Kempis; Goethe; Chaucer, Spenser, Shakespeare, Milton, Bacon, Sir Thomas Browne, Bunyan, Gray, Scott, and Wordsworth; Hawthorne and Emerson—he who reads these, and such as these, is not in serious danger of spending his time amiss. But not even such a list as this is to be received as a necessity by every reader. One may find Cowper more profitable than Wordsworth; to another, the reading of Longfellow may be more advantageous than that of Emerson; while a third may gain more immediate and lasting good from Kingsley's *Hypatia* than from a long and patient attempt to master Grote's *History of Greece* or Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.* Each individual reader must try to determine, first of all, what is best for himself. In forming his decision let him make the utmost use of the best guides, not forgetting that the average opinion of educated men is pretty sure to be a correct opinion; but let him never put aside his own honesty and individuality. He must choose his books as he chooses his friends, because of their integrity and helpfulness, and because of the pleasure their society gives him.

Lists of books, from Lord Avebury's (Sir John Lubbock's) celebrated catalogue of one hundred to the eight thousand of the American Library Association, are of value, provided that they are used for purposes of intelligent selection, and are not treated as finalities. It may be doubted whether any living person, including the compilers, has ever read or ought to have read a single one of these lists in its entirety. "To each his own" is a good motto for the choice of books; let every reader choose, or be given, the best book for his age, or need, or degree of intelligence. The hundred best books for a child are not the best for a man; there must be one choice for Boston and another for St. Petersburg. Again, some books, great landmarks in the history of literature, have had their day and done their service, never to be repeated. They may be read about, but need not be read.

It is proper, then, to put in the same list (of books for home reading recommended by a conference on college entrance requirements in English) Herodotus and *Alice in Wonderland*, Sir Thomas Malory's *Morte Darthur* and Bayard Taylor's *Views Afoot*. In most lists of the sort, however, one finds the influence of the personal equation in a dangerous degree, as where a catalogue of "*the* hundred best British books" includes Burnaby's *Ride to Khiva* and Lear's *Book of Nonsense*. Make out your catalogue if you choose, and then alter it, as Lord Avebury has done; but do not pretend to call it final or universal.

Says James Russell Lowell concerning this general topic: "One is sometimes asked by young people to recommend a course of reading. My advice would be that they should confine themselves to the supreme books in whatever literature, or, still better, choose some one great author, and make themselves thoroughly familiar with him. For, as all roads lead to Rome, so do they likewise lead away from it; and you will find that, in order to understand perfectly and weigh exactly any vital piece of literature, you will be gradually and pleasantly persuaded to excursions and explorations of which you little dreamed when you began, and you will find yourselves scholars before you are aware."

Andrew Lang is more impatient, and exclaims, in his *Adventures Among Books:* "Young men, especially in America, write to me and ask me to recommend a course of reading! Distrust a course of reading! People who really care for books *read all of them.* There is no other course. Let this be a reply. No other answer shall they get from me, the inquiring young men."

Mr. Matthew Arnold, not all of whose advice is to be implicitly received, well emphasises the necessity of reading with one's highest aims in view, when he says: "The poor require culture as much as the rich; and at present their education, even when they get education, gives them hardly anything of it; yet hardly less of it, perhaps, than the education of the rich gives to the rich. For when we say that culture is, To know the best that has been thought and said to the world, we imply that, for culture, a system directly tending to this end is necessary in our reading. Now there is no such system yet present to guide the reading of the rich, any more than of the poor. Such a system is hardly even thought of; a man who wants it must make it for himself. And our reading being so without purpose as it is, nothing can be truer than what Butler says, that really, in general, no part of our time is more idly spent than the time spent in reading. Still, culture is indispensably necessary, and culture implies reading; but reading with a purpose to guide it, and with system. He does a good work who does anything to help this; indeed, it is the one essential service now to be rendered to education. And the plea that this or that man has no time for culture will vanish as soon as we desire culture so much that we begin to examine seriously our present use of our time."

"Every book that we take up without a purpose," says Mr. Frederick Harrison, "is an opportunity lost of taking up a book with a purpose; every bit of stray information which we cram into our heads, without any sense of its importance, is for the most part a bit of the most useful information driven out of our heads and choked off from our minds. It is so certain that information, that is, the knowledge, the stored thoughts and observations of mankind, is now grown to proportions so utterly incalculable and prodigious, that even the learned whose lives are given to study can but pick up some crumbs that fall from the table of truth. They delve and tend but a plot in that vast and teeming kingdom, whilst those whom active life leaves with but a few cramped hours of study can hardly come to know the very vastness of the field before them, or how infinitesimally small is the corner they can traverse at the best. We know all is not of equal value. We know that books differ in value as much as diamonds differ from the sand on the seashore, as much as our living friend differs from a dead rat. We know that much in the myriad-peopled world of books—very much in all kinds—is trivial, enervating, inane, even noxious. And thus, where we have infinite opportunities of wasting our efforts to no end, of fatiguing our minds without enriching them, of clogging the spirit without satisfying it, there, I cannot but think, the very infinity of opportunities is robbing us of the actual power of using them. And thus I come often, in my less hopeful moods, to watch the remorseless cataract of daily literature which thunders over the remnants of the past, as if it were a fresh impediment to the men of our day in the way of systematic knowledge and consistent powers of thought; as if it were destined one day to overwhelm the great inheritance of mankind in prose and verse."

A reader who is ever seeking for a book that shall not only be helpful in some sense, but helpful in a high sense, is not likely to waste his time over that which is merely respectable instead of that which is really great. "I am not presumptuous enough," says Mr. Harrison further, "to assert that the larger part of modern literature is not worth reading in itself, that the prose is not readable, entertaining, one may say highly instructive. Nor do I pretend that the verses which we read so zealously in place of Milton's are not good verses. On the contrary, I think them sweetly conceived, as musical and as graceful as the verse of any age in our history. I say it emphatically, a great deal of our modern literature is such that it is exceedingly difficult to resist it, and it is undeniable that it gives us real information. It seems perhaps unreasonable to many to assert that a decent, readable book, which gives us actual instruction, can be otherwise than a useful companion, and a solid gain. I dare say many people are ready to cry out upon me as an obscurantist for venturing to doubt a genial confidence in all literature simply as such. But the question which weighs upon me with such really crushing urgency is this: What are the books that in our little remnant of reading time it is most vital for us to know? For the true use of books is of such sacred value to us that to be simply entertained is to cease to be taught, elevated, inspired by books; merely to gather information of a chance kind is to close the mind to knowledge of the urgent kind."

This union of freedom with authority—of a choice for one's self and a willingness to believe that the world is right in setting Shakespeare above the author of the latest " boom-book"—is, I believe, the true and the only guide in the selection of books to read. In the long run, nothing but truth, simplicity, purity, and a lofty purpose approves a book to the favour of the ages; and nothing else ought to approve it to the individual reader. Thus the end is reached and the choice is made, not by taking a book because a " course of reading " commands you to do so, but because you come to see for yourself the wisdom of the selection. The pure and wholesome heart of humanity—that thing which we call conscience—is the guide of readers as it is of every other class of workers in life.

In this connection it should be strongly emphasised that nothing is so fatal to sound habits of reading as the loss of hearty enthusiasm, and the substitution therefor of artificiality and dilettanteism. I cannot better put the wide applicability of this truth, in matters of literature, than by making another quotation from Mr. Harrison, who is in some ways one of the wisest and most helpful of recent literary counsellors. In the passages I have chosen will be found wholesome suggestions on other topics connected with the general subject of reading,—a subject which is ever branching out in new directions on this side and on that. “ I have no intention,” says Mr. Harrison, “ to moralise or to indulge in a homily against the reading of what is deliberately evil. There is not so much need for this now, and I am not discoursing on the whole duty of man. I take that part of our reading which is by itself no doubt harmless, entertaining, and even gently instructive. But of this enormous mass of literature how much deserves to be chosen out, to be preferred to all the great books of the world, to be set apart for those precious hours which are all that the most of us can give to solid reading? The vast proportion of books are books that we shall never be able to read. A serious percentage of books are not worth reading at all. The really vital books for us we also know to be a very trifling portion of the whole. And yet we act as if every book were as good as any other, as if it were merely a question of order which we take up first, as if any book were good enough for us, and as if all were alike honourable, precious, and satisfying. Alas! books cannot be more than the men who write them, and as a large proportion of the human race now write books, with motives and objects as various as human activity, books as books are entitled *a priori*, until their value is proved, to the same attention and respect as houses, steam-engines, pictures, fiddles, bonnets, and other thoughtful or ornamental products of human industry. In the shelves of those libraries which are our pride, libraries public or private, circulating or very stationary, are to be found those great books of the world, 'rari nantes in gurgite vasto,' those books which are truly 'the precious life-blood of a master spirit.' But the very familiarity which their mighty fame has bred in us makes us indifferent; we grow weary of what every one is supposed to have read, and we take down something which looks a little eccentric, or some author on the mere ground that we never heard of him before. . . . How does the trivial, provided it is the new, that which stares at us in the advertising columns of the day, crowd out the immortal poetry and pathos of the human race, vitiating our taste for those exquisite pieces which are a household word, and weakening our mental relish for the eternal works of genius! Old Homer is the very fountain-head of pure poetic enjoyment, of all that is spontaneous, simple, native, and dignified in life. He takes us into the ambrosial world of heroes, of human vigour, of purity, of grace. Now Homer is one of the few poets the life of whom can be fairly preserved in a translation. Most men and women can say that they have read Homer, just as most of us can say that we have studied Johnson's Dictionary. But how few of us take him up, time after time, with fresh delight! How few have ever read the entire *Iliad* and *Odyssey* through! Whether in the resounding lines of the old Greek, as fresh and ever-stirring as the waves that tumble on the seashore, filling the soul with satisfying, silent wonder at its restless unison; whether in the quaint lines of Chapman, or the clarion couplets of Pope, or the closer versions of Cowper, Lord Derby, or Philip Worsley, or even in the new prose version of the *Odyssey*, Homer is always fresh and rich. And yet how seldom does one find a friend spellbound over the Greek Bible [Homer] of antiquity, while they wade through torrents of magazine quotations from a petty versifier of to-day, and in an idle vacation will graze, as contentedly as cattle in a fresh meadow, through the chopped straw of a circulating library. A generation which will listen to *Pinafore* for three hundred nights, and will read M. Zola's seventeenth romance, can no more read Homer than it could read a cuneiform inscription. It will read about Homer just as it will read about a cuneiform inscription, and will crowd to see a few pots which probably came from the neighbourhood of Troy. But to Homer and the primeval type of heroic man in his beauty, and his simpleness, and joyousness, the cultured generation is really dead, as completely as some spoiled beauty of the ballroom is dead to the bloom of the heather or the waving of the daffodils in a glade. It is a true psychological problem, this nausea which idle culture seems to produce for all that is manly and pure in heroic poetry. One knows—at least every schoolboy has known—that a passage of Homer, rolling along in the hexameter or trumpeted out by Pope, will give one a hot glow of pleasure and raise a finer throb in the pulse; one knows that Homer is the easiest, most artless, most diverting of all poets; that the fiftieth reading rouses the spirit even more than the first—and yet we find ourselves (we are all alike) painfully psha-ing over some new and uncut barley-sugar in rhyme, which a man in the street asked us if we had read; or it may be some learned lucubration about the site of Troy, by some one we chanced to meet at dinner. It is an unwritten chapter in the history of the human mind, how this literary prurience after new print unmans us for the enjoyment of the old songs chanted forth in the sunrise of human imagination. To ask a man or woman who spends half a lifetime in sucking magazines and new poems, to read a book of Homer, would be like asking a butcher's boy to whistle *Adelaida*. The noises and sights and talk, the whirl and volatility of life around us, are too strong for us. A society which is for ever gossiping in a sort of perpetual 'drum' loses the very faculty of caring for anything but 'early copies' and the last tale out. Thus, like the tares in the noble parable of the Sower, a perpetual chatter about books chokes the seed which is sown in the greatest books in the world. I speak of Homer, but fifty other great poets and creators of eternal beauty would serve my argument as well."

Has it not been made clear, in the words of thoughtful counsellors by which, in this chapter, I have sought to strengthen and make plain my own sincerest convictions concerning the proper selection of books, that the reader must always search for—

Books that are wholesome;

Books that are helpful to him personally;—and that if, by following these rules, he does not find that his choice usually falls upon books which the greatest minds call great, the fault is more likely to be in himself than in them?

THE BEST TIME TO READ

IN the choice of time for reading, as in that of books to read, large liberty must be given to individual needs and habits. There is no hour of the twenty-four which may not, under certain circumstances, be profitably spent with books. In the lonely watches of a sleepless night, the precious hours of early morning, the busy forenoon, the leisurely afternoon, or the long winter evenings—whenever the time and inclination come, then is your time for reading. If the inclination does not come with the time, if the mind is weary and the attention hard to fix, then it is better to lose that special time so far as reading is concerned, and to take up something else. A much shorter period chosen under more favourable circumstances—if it is only five minutes in a busy day—will more than make up the loss.

Everybody has some time to read, however much he may have to do. Many a woman has read to excellent purpose while mixing bread, or waiting for the meat to brown, or tending the baby,—simply by reading a sentence when she could. Men have become well-read at the blacksmith's forge, or the printer's case, or behind the counter. No time is too short, and no occupation too mean, to be made to pay tribute to a real desire for knowledge. I know of a woman who read *Paradise Lost*, and two or three other standard works, aloud to her husband in a single winter, while he was shaving, that being the only available time. " Whilst you stand deliberating which book your son shall read first, another boy has read both; read anything five hours a day, and you will soon be learned," said Dr. Johnson. Five hours a day is a large amount of time, but five minutes a day, spent over good books, will give a man a great deal of knowledge worth having, before a year is out. It is the time thus spent that counts for more, to one's intellectual self, than all the rest of the day occupied in mere manual labour. " There is nothing in the recollections of my childhood," says Mary C. Ware, a wholesome old-time educator, " that I look back to with so much pleasure as reading aloud my books to my mother. She was then a woman of many cares, and in the habit of engaging in every variety of household work. Whatever she might be doing in kitchen, or dairy, or parlour she was always ready to listen to me, and to explain whatever I did not understand. There was always with her an undercurrent of thought about other things, mingling with all her domestic duties, lightening and modifying them, but never leading her to neglect them, or to perform them imperfectly. I believe it is to this trait of her character that she owes the elasticity and ready social sympathy that still animates her under the weight of almost fourscore years."

Half an hour a day is John Morley's easy minimum: "It requires no preterhuman force of will in any young man or woman—unless household circumstances are unusually vexatious and unfavourable—to get at least half an hour out of a solid busy day for good and disinterested reading. Some will say that this is too much to expect, and the first persons to say it, I venture to predict, will be those who waste their time most. At any rate, if I cannot get half an hour, I will be content with a quarter. Now, in half an hour I fancy you can read fifteen or twenty pages of Burke; or you can read one of Wordsworth's masterpieces—say the lines on Tintern; or, say, one third—if a scholar, in the original, and if not, in a translation—of a book of the *Iliad* or the *Æneid.* I am not filling the half-hour too full. But try for yourselves what you can read in half an hour. Then multiply the half-hour by 365, and consider what treasures you might have laid by at the end of the year; and what happiness, fortitude, and wisdom they would have given you for a lifetime."

There is a need of a constant mental economy in the choice of time for reading, be it much or little. "It is true," says Philip Gilbert Hamerton, "that the most absolute master of his own hours still needs thrift if he would turn them to account, and that too many never learn this thrift, whilst others learn it late." Nor is it only those whose pursuits are not distinctly literary who fail to make the best use of the passing hours. "Few intellectual men," says Mr. Hamerton, "have the art of economising the hours of study. The very necessity, which every one acknowledges, of giving vast portions of life to attain proficiency in anything, makes us prodigal where we ought to be parsimonious, and careless where we have need of unceasing vigilance. The best time-savers are a love of soundness in all we learn or do, and a cheerful acceptance of inevitable limitations. There is a certain point of proficiency at which an acquisition begins to be of use, and unless we have the time and resolution necessary to reach that point, our labour is as completely thrown away as that of the mechanic who began to make an engine but never finished it. Each of us has acquisitions which remain permanently unavailable from their unsoundness: a language or two that we can neither speak nor write, a science of which the elements have not been mastered, an art which we cannot practise with satisfaction either to others or to ourselves. Now the time spent on these unsound accomplishments has been in great measure wasted; not quite absolutely wasted, since the mere labour of trying to learn has been a discipline for the mind, but wasted so far as the accomplishments themselves are concerned. And this mental discipline, on which so much stress is laid by those whose interest it is to encourage unsound accomplishments, might be obtained more perfectly if the subjects of study were less numerous and more thoroughly understood."

We are not to understand from this that nothing is to be studied with which we do not intend to become profoundly acquainted, for much knowledge must of necessity be fragmentary and incomplete. The adviser is merely warning us against purposeless intellectual trifling.

The Germans, who certainly have great results to show for the time they spend in reading and other intellectual pursuits, may profitably teach us two lessons concerning the best time to read: that brain-work should be steady and uninterrupted while it lasts, and that it should be varied by periods of rest and changed employment. "In the charming and precious letters of Victor Jacquemont," says Hamerton, "a man whose life was dedicated to culture, and who not only lived for it, but died for it, there is a passage about the intellectual labours of Germans, which takes due account of the expenditure of time." Jacquemont's letter runs as follows: "Being astonished at the prodigious variety and at the extent of knowledge possessed by the Germans, I begged one of my friends, Saxon by birth, and one of the foremost geologists in Europe, to tell me how his countrymen managed to know so many things. Here is his answer, nearly in his own words: 'A German (except myself, who am the idlest of men) gets up early, summer and winter, at about five o'clock. He works four hours before breakfast, sometimes smoking all the time, which does not interfere with his application. His breakfast lasts about half an hour, and he remains, afterwards, another half-hour talking with his wife and playing with his children. He returns to his work for six hours, dines without hurrying himself, smokes an hour after dinner, playing again with his children, and before he goes to bed he works four hours more. He begins again every day, and never goes out. This is how it comes to pass that Oersted, the greatest natural philosopher in Germany, is at the same time the greatest physician; this is how Kant, the metaphysician, was one of the most learned astronomers in Europe; and how Goethe, who is at present the first and most fertile author in Germany in almost all kinds of literature, is an excellent botanist, mineralogist, and natural philosopher.' "

This persistency of the German character evokes grand results even from dull brains, which one would think were steeped in beer and shrivelled by excessive smoking. The advantages of persistency and a "change of works," in the choice of time for brain labour, Mr. Hamerton thus further presses: "The encouraging inference which you may draw from this in reference to your own case is that, since all intellectual men have had more than one pursuit, you may set off your business against the most absorbing of their pursuits, and for the rest be still almost as rich in time as they have been. You may study literature as some painters have studied it, or science as some literary men have studied it. The first step is to establish a regulated economy of your time, so that, without interfering with a due attention to business and to health, you may get two clear hours every day for reading of the best kind. It is not much; some men would tell you it is not enough; but I purposely fix the expenditure of time at a low figure because I want it to be always practicable, consistently with all the duties and necessary pleasures of your life. If I told you to read four hours every day, I know beforehand what would be the consequence. You would keep the rule for three or four days, by an effort, then some engagement would occur to break it, and you would have no rule at all. And please observe that the two hours are to be given quite regularly, because, when the time given is not much, regularity is quite essential. Two hours a day, regularly, make more than seven hundred hours in a year, and in seven hundred hours, wisely and uninterruptedly occupied, much may be done in anything. Permit me to insist upon that word uninterruptedly. Few people realise the full evil of an interruption, few people know all that is implied by it."

Thus to avoid interruption we may properly separate ourselves at times from the society of our ordinary companions at home or abroad, when such separation is essential to sound reading and thinking. I do not mean that this separation should be carried, as it too often is, to the extent of positive discourtesy and selfishness. Sometimes the best possible hour for reading is that spent over books with husband or wife or friend. But as between time well spent with books, and time foolishly spent in "society," there can be no doubt as to the proper choice. Readers must give up something, and that something often proves to be an undue devotion to the customs and rules of fashionable social intercourse, than which there is no more formidable foe to the reading habit.

"There is a degree of incompatibility," Mr. Hamerton says further, "between the fashionable and the intellectual lives, which makes it necessary, at a certain time, to choose one or the other as our own. There is no hostility, there need not be any uncharitable feeling on one side or the other, but there must be a resolute choice between the two. If you decide for the intellectual life, you will incur a definite loss to set against your gain. Your existence may have calmer and profounder satisfactions, but it will be less amusing, and even in an appreciable degree less human; less in harmony, I mean, with the common instincts and feelings of humanity. For the fashionable world, although decorated by habits of expense, has enjoyment for its object, and arrives at enjoyment by those methods which the experience of generations has proved most efficacious. Variety of amusement, frequent change of scenery and society, healthy exercise, pleasant occupation of the mind without fatigue—these things do indeed make existence agreeable to human nature, and the science of living agreeably is better understood in the fashionable society of England than by laborious students and savants. The life led by that society is the true heaven of the natural man, who likes to have frequent feasts and a hearty appetite, who enjoys the varying spectacle of wealth, and splendour, and pleasure, who loves to watch, from the Olympus of his personal ease, the curious results of labour in which he takes no part, the interesting ingenuity of the toiling world below. In exchange for these varied pleasures of the spectator, the intellectual life can offer you but one satisfaction; for all its promises are reducible simply to this, that you shall come at last, after infinite labour, into contact with some great reality, that you shall know and do in such sort that you will feel yourself on firm ground and be recognised—probably not much applauded, but yet recognised — as a fellow-labourer by other knowers and doers. Before you come to this, most of your present accomplishments will be abandoned by yourself as unsatisfactory and insufficient, but one or two of them will be turned to better account, and will give you after many years a tranquil self-respect, and, what is still rarer and better, a very deep and earnest reverence for the greatness which is above you. Severed from the vanities of the illusory, you will live with the realities of knowledge, as one who has quitted the painted scenery of the theatre to listen by the eternal ocean or gaze at the granite hills."

From all that has been said, the reader has seen how closely the best choice of time for reading is connected with the best use of that time. If we devote to books the hours or the minutes we can catch, and choose our reading with a full sense of the wideness of the field of selection and the narrowness of the time in which we can work in that field, we shall hardly go astray in our decision.

HOW MUCH TO READ

THE amount which it is advisable for one to read can no more be settled off-hand, in a general way, than the quantity of his food or the proper limit of his physical exercise. Tastes, necessities, and opportunities differ; some persons can undoubtedly read very much faster than others, and yet get as much profit from their reading. And it is hardly necessary to say that a novel is "quicker reading" than a history of Greece; or that a clever bit of *vers de société* need not occupy the mind so long as a passage of equal length from Milton or Homer. Then, again, a clear and luminous writer does not delay the reader as does an obscure and artificial one.

In general terms, one has passed the proper limit of reading when he reads without suitable apprehension, and understanding, and promise of retention in memory, of the page before him, whether it be novel or history, humorous poem or didactic verse. "Reading with me incites to reflection instantly," says Henry Ward Beecher;

"I cannot separate the origination of ideas from the reception of ideas; the consequence is, as I read I always begin to think in various directions, and that makes my reading slow." Emerson advised the closing of any book as soon as it ceased to move the reader's mind. Dugald Stewart thus emphasises this duty of thoughtfulness in reading: "Nothing, in truth, has such a tendency to weaken, not only the powers of invention, but the intellectual powers in general, as a habit of extensive and various reading without reflection. The activity and force of the mind are gradually impaired in consequence of disuse; and, not unfrequently, all our principles and opinions come to be lost in the infinite multiplicity and discordancy of our acquired ideas."

John Locke tells us, in homely but sensible phrase, that "Those who have read everything are thought to understand everything too; but it is not always so. Reading furnishes the mind only with the materials of knowledge; it is thinking that makes what we read ours. We are of the ruminating kind, and it is not enough to cram ourselves with a great load of collections: unless we chew them over again, they will not give us strength and nourishment." W. P. Atkinson, formerly professor in the Massachusetts Institute of Technology,—in one of the best of the many treatises on our general subject of reading,—thus enforces the same lesson: "The most important question for the good student and reader is not, amidst this multitude of books which no man can number, how much he shall read. The really important questions are, first, what is the quality of what he does read; and, second, what is his manner of reading it. There is an analogy which is more than accidental between physical and mental assimilation and digestion; and, homely as the illustration may seem, it is the most forcible I can use. Let two sit down to a table spread with food: one possessed of a healthy appetite, and knowing something of the nutritious qualities of the various dishes before him; the other cursed with a pampered and capricious appetite, and knowing nothing of the results of chemical and physiological investigation. One shall make a better meal, and go away stronger and better fed, on a dish of oatmeal, than the other on a dinner that has emptied his pockets. Shall we study physiological chemistry and know all about what is food for the body, and neglect mental chemistry, and be utterly careless as to what nutriment is contained in the food we give our minds? I am not speaking here of vicious literature; we don't spread our tables with poisons. I speak only of the varying amount of nutritive matter contained in books."

The usefulness of books lies not only in themselves but in the mind of the reader. Petrarch says: "Books have brought some men to knowledge, and some to madness. As fulness sometimes hurteth the stomach more than hunger, so fareth it with the wits, and, as of meats, so likewise of books, the use ought to be limited according to the quality of him that useth them."

Lord Bacon, in his famous essay, wisely says: "Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and consider."

Coleridge concluded, in speaking of the frivolous and make-believe attention of unworthy readers to unworthy books: "Some readers are like the hour-glass—their reading is as the sand. It runs in and runs out, but leaves not a vestige behind. Some like a sponge, which imbibes everything, and returns it in the same state, only a little dirtier. Some like a jelly-bag, which allows all that is pure to pass away, and retains only the refuse and dregs. The fourth class may be compared to the slave of Golconda, who, casting away all that is worthless, preserves only the pure gems."

"To stuff our minds with what is simply trivial, simply curious, or that which at best has but a low nutritive power," says Frederick Harrison, "this is to close our minds to what is solid and enlarging and spiritually sustaining. . . . I think the habit of reading wisely is one of the most difficult habits to acquire, needing strong resolution and infinite pains; and I hold the habit of reading for mere reading's sake, instead of for the sake of the stuff we gain from reading, to be one of the worst and commonest and most unwholesome habits we have. Why do we still suffer the traditional hypocrisy about the dignity of literature, literature I mean in the gross, which includes about equal parts of what is useful and what is useless? Why are books as books, writers as writers, readers as readers, meritorious and honourable, apart from any good in them, or anything that we can get from them? Why do we pride ourselves on our powers of absorbing print, as our grandfathers did on their gifts in imbibing port, when we know that there is a mode of absorbing print which makes it impossible we can ever learn anything good out of books? Our stately Milton said in a passage which is one of the watchwords of the English race, 'As good almost kill a man as kill a good book.' But has he not also said that he would 'have a vigilant eye how books demean themselves as well as men, and do sharpest justice on them as malefactors'? Yes! they do kill the good book who deliver up their few and precious hours of reading to the trivial book; they make it dead for them; they do what lies in them to destroy 'the precious life-blood of a master spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life'; they 'spill that seasoned life of man preserved and stored up in books.' For in the wilderness of books most men, certainly all busy men, must strictly choose. If they saturate their minds with the idler books, the 'good book,' which Milton calls 'an immortality rather than a life,' is dead to them: it is a book sealed up and buried."

And just here, even at the risk of repeating what has been said before, in this series of chapters, I want to quote some words of the German pessimistic philosopher Schopenhauer: "It is the case with literature as with life: wherever we turn we come upon the incorrigible mob of humankind, whose name is Legion, swarming everywhere, damaging everything, as flies in summer. Hence the multiplicity of bad books, those exuberant weeds of literature which choke the true corn. Such books rob the public of time, money, and attention, which ought properly to belong to good literature and noble aims, and they are written with a view merely to make money or occupation. They are therefore not merely useless, but injurious. Nine tenths of our current literature has no other end but to inveigle a thaler or two out of the public pocket, for which purpose author, publisher, and printer are leagued together. A more pernicious, subtler, and bolder piece of trickery is that by which penny-a-liners and scribblers succeed in destroying good taste and real culture. . . . Hence the paramount importance of acquiring the art not to read; in other words, of not reading such books as occupy the public mind, or even those which make a noise in the world, and reach several editions in their first and last years of existence. We should recollect that he who writes for fools finds an enormous audience, and we should devote the ever scant leisure of our circumscribed existence to the master spirits of all ages and nations, those who tower over humanity, and whom the voice of Fame proclaims: only such writers cultivate and instruct us. Of bad books we can never read too little; of the good never too much. The bad are intellectual poison and undermine the understanding. Because people insist on reading not the best books written for all time, but the newest contemporary literature, writers of the day remain in the narrow circle of the same perpetually revolving ideas, and the age continues to wallow in its own mire. . . . Mere acquired knowledge belongs to us only like a wooden leg and wax nose. Knowledge attained by means of thinking resembles our natural limbs, and is the only kind that really belongs to us. Hence the difference between the thinker and the pedant. The intellectual possession of the independent thinker is like a beautiful picture which stands before us, a living thing with fitting light and shadow, sustained tones, perfect harmony of colour. That of the merely learned man may be compared to a palette covered with bright colours, perhaps even arranged with some system, but wanting in harmony, coherence, and meaning. . . . Only those writers profit us whose understanding is quicker, more lucid than our own, by whose brain we indeed think for a time, who quicken our thoughts, and lead us whither alone we could not find our way."

When one perceives that he is turning page after page without noting what is printed thereon, without reflecting on the information afforded him, or without knowing why he is reading at all, it is time for him to stop, whether he has read one page or one thousand. We take it for granted, as was urged in a previous chapter, that every wise reader will determine first of all why he has chosen a particular book: whether for instruction, or guidance, or warning, or mere amusement. In any case—and this remark applies to books taken up for amusement and recreation, as well as to the gravest history or the most abstruse mathematical treatise—when the book ceases to perform its legitimate function, it is time to lay it down and engage in some other occupation.

"Do not read too much at a time," says Edward E. Hale; "stop when you are tired, and in whatever way make some review of what you read, even as you go along."

Here, as in every other division of the general subject, the duty of attention to purpose should ever be borne in mind. If your purpose is to learn, read just enough to learn; if to rest your mind, read just enough to do that. When a history becomes a tiresome burden, or a biography but an idle amusement, or a novel a task, then you may be quite sure that you have read too much.

Some persons read both too much and too little; they handle a great many volumes on a vast number of topics, but, having failed to assimilate what they have read, they feel at last the dearth that comes from a dissipation of power.

Bishop Potter advises us to "study subjects rather than books; therefore compare different authors on the same subjects; the statements of authors with information collected from other sources, and the conclusions drawn by a writer with the rules of sound logic." Should one thus regulate his time for intellectual work, he would find that any essential or habitual deviation from this plan would be, so far as the plan is concerned, a waste of time, and an overplus of reading. If one is determined to read Green's *Short History of the English People*, for instance, he is reading too much if he sits up half the night to finish the last ephemeral novel of which a hundred thousand copies were sold before publication.

If, on the other hand, he is preparing for a village reading-club a careful analysis of the general method of some worthy novelist, he will be reading too much if he gives himself a "stint" of two hundred of Green's pages in a day. What under certain circumstances would be praiseworthy and advantageous, under others is blameworthy and injurious.

In this connection a word should be said concerning rereading. Luther says: "All who would study with advantage, in any art whatsoever, ought to betake themselves to the reading of some sure and certain books oftentimes over; for to read many books produceth confusion, rather than learning, like as those who dwell everywhere are not anywhere at home." John Morley, in his address on the popular study of literature, remarked: "I need not tell you that you will find that most books worth reading once are worth reading twice, and—what is most important of all—the masterpieces of literature are worth reading a thousand times. It is a great mistake to think that because you have read a masterpiece once or twice, or ten times, therefore you have done with it. Because it is a masterpiece, you ought to live with it, and make it part of your daily life."

It is of course well to reread good books; almost everyone has a favourite author or authors, to whom he turns with constant delight and profit, and the habit of a second, or third, or fourth reading of a good book, or chapter of a book, greatly aids the understanding and the memory. But this habit may easily be carried too far. We must forget something,— much. God has so ordered our mental powers, and it is useless for us to quarrel with the ordering. Therefore we should not attempt to read a few books constantly, to the entire and virtual neglect of others. There are too many noble volumes that we must leave untouched, at the best. Read carefully and thoughtfully, and reread wisely; but do not lament unduly your failures of memory, nor strive to correct them by excessive devotion to one little niche in the cathedral of literature.

As regards the question how much to read, there is often a sad similarity of mental vacuousness between those who read next to nothing at all, and those who skim newspapers, magazines, and books with the same superficial purposelessness. I would that these true words of two eminent English educators could at least be read aloud, if no more, in the hearing of those who will not read for themselves. R. H. Quick, after quoting Mark Pattison's statement that "the dearth of books is only the outward and visible sign of the mental torpor which reigns in those destitute regions,"—the middle-class homes of England,—goes on to say: "I much doubt if he would find more books in the middle-class homes of the Continent. There is only one kind of reading that is nearly universal—the reading of newspapers; and the newspaper lacks the element of permanence, and belongs to the domain of talk rather than of literature. Even when we get among the so-called 'educated,' we find that those who care for literature form a very small minority. The rest have of course read Shakespeare and Milton and Walter Scott and Tennyson, but they do not read them. The lion's share of our time and thoughts and interests must be given to our business or profession, whatever that may be; and in few instances is this connected with literature. For the rest, whatever time or thought a man can spare from his calling is mostly given to his family, or to society, or to some hobby which is not literature. And love of literature is not seen in such reading as is common. The literary spirit shows itself, as I said, in appreciating beauty of expression; and how far beauty of expression is cared for we may estimate from the fact that few people think of reading anything a second time. The ordinary reader is profoundly indifferent about style, and will not take the trouble to understand ideas. He keeps to periodicals or light fiction, which enables the mind to loll in its easy chair (so to speak), and see pass before it a series of pleasing images. An idea, as Mark Pattison says, is an excitant, comes from mind and calls forth mind; an image is a sedative, and most people, when they take up a book, are seeking a sedative."

In a "day of uninspired thought and clever craftsmanship," as our time has been called, those who read little, or little that is good, display to all beholders their own mental vacuity. "You can tell a man by the company he keeps." "There is a choice in books as in friends," says Lowell, "and the mind sinks or rises to the level of its habitual society: is subdued, as Shakespeare says of the dyer's hand, to what it works in. Cato's advice, *Cum bonis ambula*, consort with the good, is quite as true if we extend it to books, for they, too, insensibly give away their own nature to the mind that converses with them. They either beckon upwards or drag down.''

It is with good books as with true friends: spend in their company all the time you can give.

REMEMBERING WHAT ONE READS

SCARCELY anything is more annoying to readers than the fact that they forget so much of what they read. In history, dates and names pass from the mind; poems once known by heart fade away from recollection; and the characters, the plots, or perhaps the very titles of stories which were once familiar depart as utterly as though they had never been known at all.

In connection with this question of the retention or non-retention of what one reads, it should never be forgotten, as was remarked in the preceding chapter, that God has evidently arranged the powers of the human mind in such a way that we must forget a great deal, however carefully we strive to remember all we can. A large part of our knowledge, too, is to be considered as nutriment, or as intellectual exercise; and we should no more lament its loss than the fact that we do not remember what we had for breakfast a year ago to-day, or the exact length of the invigorating walk we took on that breezy morning week before last. Some books are by no means read without profit if a part, or even the whole, of them be forgotten beyond recall. And it is a consolation to reflect that the very best use to which some of our past reading can be put is to be forgotten as speedily as possible. If we have lost some things that were good and pleasant, we have luckily blotted from our minds not a little that was noxious and unattractive.

But a "poor memory" is a thing that can be materially strengthened; and after all reservations have been made, we should not forget the duty of remembering all we really ought to remember, so far as the natural powers of our minds permit. The first and the last aid to a memory is a habit of paying strict attention to what we read. "Special efforts should be made to retain what is gathered from reading," says President Porter, "if any such efforts are required. Some persons read with an interest so wakeful and responsive, and an attention so fixed and energetic, as to need no appliances and no efforts in order to retain what they read. They look upon a page and it is imprinted upon the memory. . . . But there are others who read only to lose and to forget. Facts and truths, words and thoughts, are alike evanescent. We shall not attempt to explain here the nature of these differences. We are concerned only to devise the remedy; we insist that those who labour under these difficulties should use special appliances to avoid or overcome them. But that upon which we insist most of all, is that what we read we should seek to make our own only in the manner and after the measure of which we are capable." Doctor Porter then goes on to advise each reader to follow his natural bent and aptitudes; and not to worry, if he lacks a good verbal memory, over his inability to remember choice phrases or striking stanzas, nor to vex his soul over his failure to retain names and dates. "When a man reads," he says, "he should put himself into the most intimate intercourse with his author, so that all his energies of apprehension, judgment, and feeling may be occupied with, and aroused by, what his author furnishes, whatever it may be. If repetition or review will aid him in this, as it often will, let him not disdain or neglect frequent reviews. If the use of the pen, in brief or full notes, in catch-words or other symbols, will aid him, let him not shrink from the drudgery of the pen and the commonplace-book. . . . But there is no charm or efficacy in such mechanism by itself. It is only valuable as a means to an end, and that end is to quicken the intellectual energies by arousing and holding the attention."

Hamerton has expressed an opinion that what is called a "defective memory" is by no means an unmixed evil. He says there is such a thing as a "selecting memory, which is not only useful for what it retains, but for what it rejects." What really interests us we can usually retain without recourse to any elaborate system of mnemonics. That which does not properly interest us we cannot thus retain. "Had Goethe been a poor student, bound down to the exclusive legal studies which did not greatly interest him, it is likely that no one would ever have suspected his immense faculty of assimilation. In this way men who are set by others to load their memories with what is not their proper intellectual food never get the credit of having any memory at all, and end by themselves believing that they have none. These bad memories are often the best; they are often the selecting memories. They seldom win distinction in examinations; but in literature and art they are quite incomparably superior to the miscellaneous memories that receive only as boxes and drawers receive what is put into them. A good literary or artistic memory is not like a post-office, that takes in everything, but like a very well edited periodical, which prints nothing that does not harmonise with its intellectual life."

I fully believe in training and disciplining and developing the memory. But I also believe that the very essence of that training is the cultivation of a habit of friendliness, kinship, and intimacy with the printed page. Mere mnemonic devices have been said to be like tying a frying-pan to one coat-tail and a child's kite to another. The true art of memory is the art of perceiving the relations and uses of things, not their external characteristics; and above all, not their artificial relations to some essentially foreign object or symbol. The purpose of memory is to help us; when a memory-machine fails to help us, and cumbers and overshadows that which it pretends to aid, it is worse than worthless.

Again, it should be kept in mind that no one brain has a right to tyrannise over another, or to lay down laws for it, in this matter of memory. For instance, a certain person remembers instinctively, and without effort, the name of the author, publisher, and printer of whatever book he takes in his hand, and also its size, shape, colour of binding, and style of typography. Two or three readings of a college catalogue leave upon his mind the surnames, Christian names, and residences of a majority of the persons there recorded. Guidebooks and city directories are a rest and recreation to him; the names, locations, and pastors of the majority of all the churches in the cities he has visited are retained in mind without effort; and frequently, when visiting a town for the first time, this habit of memory leads him to be considered a local antiquary and specialist. Now, these things seem so natural to him, and are acquired so absolutely without effort of any kind, that he can hardly understand why everyone else does not remember them equally well. But he has not the slightest right to prescribe a course of guidebooks, college catalogues, or city directories for others, any more than they have to demand that he recite Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, or give the dates of the Third Punic War, or the signing of the Magna Charta, or Braddock's defeat, which he remembers with as much difficulty as any other reader.

In other words, no one has a right to insist that another person shall remember as or what he himself remembers. But it should always be demanded of every reader that he conscientiously try to strengthen his memory by seeking to understand the nature and purpose of what he reads, its serviceableness to himself, and to the world through him, and its relations to his particular mental constitution and his wise intellectual regimen.

This diversity of memories is admirably stated by Cardinal Newman. "We can," he says, "form an abstract idea of memory, and call it one faculty which has for its subject-matter all past facts of our personal experience; but this is really only an illusion; for there is no such gift of universal memory. Of course we all remember in a way as we reason, in all subject-matters, but I am speaking of remembering rightly, as I spoke of reasoning rightly. In real fact, memory, as a talent, is not one indivisible faculty, but a power of retaining and recalling the past in this or that department of our experience, not in any whatever. Two memories, which are both specially retentive, may also be incommensurate. Some men can recite the canto of a poem, or a good part of a speech, after once reading it, but have no head for dates. Others have great capacity for the vocabulary of languages, but recollect nothing of the small occurrences of the day or year. Others never forget any statement which they have read, and can give volume and page, but have no memory for faces. I have known those who could, without effort, run through the succession of days on which Easter fell for years back; or could say where they were, or what they were doing, on a given day in a given year; or could recollect the Christian names of friends and strangers; or could enumerate in exact order the names on all the shops from Hyde Park corner to the Bank; or had so mastered the University Calendar as to be able to bear an examination in the academical history of any M.A. taken at random. And I believe in most of these cases the talent, in its exceptional character, did not extend beyond several classes of subjects. There are a hundred memories as there are a hundred virtues."

Phenomenal memory — the power to repeat a chapter after a single reading or a sermon after one hearing—is often associated with mental incapacity in other lines of effort. The ability to "quote poetry," or, in the exaggerated phrase, "to repeat all Shakespeare by heart," is of course a comfort in sleepless nights, or in travel, or in age. But, after all, there is no use in trying to make one's head a reference-library for things that might as well be left between the covers of books. The selective memory, that adapts needed things to its own uses, is the best. Says the historian Rhodes of two self-educated Presidents, Andrew Johnson and Abraham Lincoln: "Johnson never mastered a book as Lincoln did the Bible and Shakespeare, weaving the substance into his mental being."

THE USE OF NOTE-BOOKS

A SEPARATE chapter on the use of note-books would hardly be necessary, in this series of papers on right methods of reading, were it not that many people so misapprehend the real service of books of memoranda, and make them a burden rather than a help. Note-books, like all other aids to reading, reflection, and the utilisation of knowledge, should be valued for the true assistance they may render, and for that alone. But it very often happens that one who is beginning to read comes to the conclusion that method in reading, especially in the preservation of its results, is the one thing essential, and that nothing is so useful, toward this end, as an elaborate note-book system. Therefore he purchases a large alphabetised blank book, and having begun to read *Taine's English Literature*, let us say, he makes elaborate entries of matters contained in the first few chapters. But as his note-book must also record everything that impresses him as likely to have any future usefulness, he sets down with equal painstaking the leading points of an article on English literature in the last number of some monthly magazine, or copies entire an interesting paragraph from a daily newspaper. After a few days, or perhaps weeks, he finds it inconvenient to hunt up note-book, pen, and ink, every time he takes a volume in his hand, and so he gradually lessens the number of entries; and thus the book soon becomes an unserviceable and unused chronicle of a few straggling facts,— to be remanded to the closet shelf, or to be cut up, at last, for kindling or scribbling paper. In the end, such a note-book becomes a weight and an incumbrance upon the reading habit, rather than a helper to it.

A note-book should be started upon a plan too modest rather than too ambitious, and should never be allowed to get above the humble place of a servant. One little blank-book, costing a dime, is far more useful, if employed only for the entry of important references or memoranda, and such only, than the most elaborate index rerum or commonplace-book, if made too cumbersome to be of real service. And it is generally true that a note-book should follow the reading habit, rather than precede it. If you have not done something toward filling your brain first, do not expect to make up the deficiency by your notebook entries.

Some readers and writers make little use of notebooks, and some find them extremely serviceable. It has been said that "the brain is the best and most reliable memorandum book; it is always at hand, use enlarges its capacity and increases its usefulness and reliability, and no one can read it but its owner." I quite agree with this; finding all sorts of elaborate memorandum books of little use to me, and employing nothing more than the most inexpensive pocket blank-books, to be torn up when their usefulness has passed; or now and then a series of envelopes, with their special subjects written upon them.

But in this matter no one reader can lay down the law for another. Some of the wisest of American authors have pursued to the fullest extent the plan of using note-books all their lives, and with admirable results. Mr. Emerson's notebooks are famous the world over, and it is said, doubtless with entire truth, that some of his most renowned essays are little more than transcripts of them. His entries of course included his own conclusions and reflections as well as those of others. It was my good fortune to be permitted to see, some years ago, the remarkable and substantially similar methods by which two other American authors—A. Bronson Alcott and Ray Palmer—preserved well-nigh the entire body of the letters they received in the whole course of their literary lives. In both cases these valuable libraries of correspondence became a long file of volumes; and Mr. Alcott combined with his a diary of each day's events for a lifetime. Such collections as these are in a true sense monumental, and are, in a way, valuable contributions to the intellectual history of the time—though they must include a great deal of waste matter.

The late William B. Reed, an agreeable, if forgotten, American writer of literary essays, says of the right use of quotation books: "As in every house, we are told, there is a skeleton, and in every doctor's shop a case of instruments for emergencies, mysteriously veiled from vulgar gaze, so in all libraries, and especially if it be one of a writer or public speaker, are there corners where are put away for convenient use not only commonplace-books, happily out of date, but indexes rerum, and *Burton's Anatomy*, and *Mur-*

ray's Handbooks for Geographical Illustration, and lexicons and concordances (all honours to those immortal C's, Cruden and Mrs. Cowden Clarke), a thesaurus or two, and finally 'dictionaries of quotations.' It depends very much upon their nature whether such dictionaries are good or bad. The young student uses them, and for this end they were first devised, to furnish him with quotations with which to garnish what he writes, and show his scholarship. This is spurious. It is, the poet tells us, the page of knowledge which is 'rich with the spoils of time.' It is out of the depths of a full mind that bright literary illustrations bubble up to the surface, and any critical eye can detect without fail a got-up quotation, or one which a mere dictionary supplies. Not so the 'dictionary,' as it were, which aids memory, and, given a fragment or sometimes even a word, enables the scholar to find the context. They are not merely valuable, but, as auxiliaries, they are essential to complete literary work. So it is with written note-books; they cannot take the place of thought; but they can strengthen and arm it."

Professor W. P. Atkinson, in his excellent lecture on reading, speaks warmly of the proper use of note-books. "I cannot close," says he, "without giving you one little piece of purely practical advice. I advise you all to become what I am myself, a devoted disciple of Captain Cuttle, and to bind on your brows his admirable maxim, 'When found, make a note of.' Witty old Thomas Fuller says: 'Adventure not all thy learning in one bottom, but divide it between thy memory and thy note-books. . . . A commonplace-book contains many notions in garrison, whence an owner may draw out an army into the field on competent warning.' This is one of those notions which I have kept in the garrison of my note-book for many years. . . . Reading is only the fuel; and, the mind once on fire, any and all material will feed the flame, provided only it have any combustible matter in it. And we cannot tell from what quarter the next material will come. The thought we need, the facts we are in search of, may make their appearance in the corner of the newspaper, or in some forgotten volume long ago consigned to dust and oblivion. Hawthorne, in the parlor of a country inn, on a rainy day, could find mental nutriment in an old directory. That accomplished philologist the late Lord Strangford could find ample amusement for an hour's delay at a railway station in tracing out the etymology of the names in Bradshaw. The mind that is not awake and alive will find a library a barren wilderness. Now, gather up the scraps and fragments of thought on whatever subject you may be studying,—for of course by a note-book I do not mean a mere receptacle for odds and ends, a literary dust-bin,—but acquire the habit of gathering everything, whenever and wherever you find it, that belongs in your line or lines of study, and you will be surprised to see how such fragments will arrange themselves into an orderly whole by the very organising power of your own thinking, acting in a definite direction. This is a true process of self-education; but you see it is no mechanical process of aggregation. It requires activity of thought,—but without that, what is any reading but mere passive amusement? And it requires method. I have myself a sort of literary book-keeping. I keep a day-book, and at my leisure I post my literary accounts, bringing together in proper groups the fruits of much casual reading."

I may appropriately close this chapter with some words of advice on the use of note-books, which Mr. Charles A. Durfee, a competent authority on the subject, has written for the benefit of my readers. "Note-books," says Mr. Durfee, "are to literary men what books of account are to business men, and are practically useful only as they are kept systematically and with unity of purpose. But where a balance-sheet tells the whole story in business, some methodical plan must be substituted to render the contents of note-books available at all times. The natural desire, on the part of energetic literary men, to economise time and labour in the taking and keeping of notes leads to confusion; and in time they find themselves surrounded by a mass of material disheartening to think of, and impossible to consult with readiness.

"A few suggestions resulting from long experience may be of value. Note-books should not be so small as to become too numerous, or so large as to be cumbersome. Each book should be paged and have a volume number. An underscored heading should precede each note, with dividing lines between entries. By observing these precautions the books can be indexed in an alphabeted blank-book, and consulted as if they were the successive volumes of any indexed work. For ordinary purposes such a plan would be sufficient, but those whose lives are devoted to general literature or special branches require to give more attention to details. No blank-book index can long remain convenient, as the entries lose their alphabetical place.

"To obviate this, for permanent use, a card-index is indispensable, being always perfect in arrangement, inasmuch as the newly made cards are inserted in their precise positions. In the case of blank-book indexes this is impossible as soon as a few titles have been interlined, which defaces and obscures the page. Cards cut from heavy manilla paper, arranged in boxes or trays, separated by lettered divisions of card-board projecting above the rest, form an index, which, from its expansiveness, cheapness, and portability, meets every requirement.

"A card measuring two inches by five inches has been generally adopted in our leading libraries for such purposes. Such a system renders unnecessary the keeping of separate note-books for different subjects, as a properly prepared index will be classified, under adequate headings, and serve as a guide and summary to the entire literary matter, however extensive, of the most industrious workers."

THE CULTIVATION OF TASTE

TASTE can be cultivated. This remark, one would say, is of obvious truth, and needs no discussion whatever; but, in point of fact, scarcely anything related to the reading habit is more frequently ignored or practically denied. "I have no taste for poetry"; "I never could enjoy history"; "Biography may be very well, but I never could read it"; "I suppose Walter Scott and Hawthorne are higher reading than G. P. R. James or Miss Braddon, but my taste prefers the latter";—such remarks as these are sure to encounter one who is seeking to raise the standard of reading. Forgetting that growth and development are the almost unvarying method of nature in every line, too many people profess to believe, and certainly act as though believing, that a present literary taste is an inflexible and unalterable thing, to be accepted without question, and no more to be changed by us than our residence upon the earth instead of upon the moon.

Lord Lytton is not an author to whom I am accustomed to look for the highest conceptions of life or the wisest rules for its conduct; but on this subject of the cultivation of taste he puts some excellent words into the mouth of one of the characters of his novels, who explains that good sense and good taste are the result of a constant habit of right thinking and acting, of self-denial, and of regulation, rather than accident or natural temperament. "Good sense," says he, "is not a merely intellectual attribute. It is rather the result of a just equilibrium of all our faculties, spiritual and moral. The dishonest, or the toys of their own passions, may have genius; but they rarely, if ever, have good sense in the conduct of life. They may often win large prizes, but it is by a game of chance, not skill. But the man whom I perceive walking an honourable and upright career, just to others and also to himself, . . . is a more dignified representative of his Maker than the mere child of genius. Of such a man, we say, he has good sense; yes, but he has also integrity, self-respect, and self-denial. A thousand trials which his sense braves and conquers are temptations also to his probity, his temper; in a word, to all the many sides of his complicated nature. Now, I do not think he will have this good sense any more than a drunkard will have strong nerves, unless he be in the constant habit of keeping his mind clear from the intoxication of envy, vanity, and the various emotions that dupe and mislead us. Good sense is not, therefore, an abstract quality, or a solitary talent; it is the natural result of the habit of thinking justly, and, therefore, seeing clearly, and is as different from the sagacity that belongs to a diplomatist or an attorney as the philosophy of Socrates differed from the rhetoric of Gorgias. As a mass of individual excellences make up this attribute in a man, so a mass of such men thus characterised give character to a nation. Your England is, therefore, renowned for its good sense, but it is renowned also for the excellences which accompany strong sense in an individual: high honesty and faith in its dealings, a warm love of justice and fair play, a general freedom from the violent crimes common on the Continent, and the energetic perseverance in enterprise once commenced, which results from a bold and healthful disposition."

A bold and healthful disposition, such as Lord Lytton thus ascribes to his typical Englishman, is ever on the watch for something better rather than something worse; for something that will develop and strengthen, rather than something that will merely pass muster. So it is in the choice of books. You can " tell a man " by the books — or nowadays by the newspapers — he reads. If a person never strives " to look up and not down," in his selection of books, he need not expect to see any improvement in his intellectual faculties, or in his personal character so far as influenced by those faculties. President Porter well says: "Inspiration, genius, individual tastes, elective affinities, do not necessarily include self-knowledge, self-criticism, or self-control. If the genius of a man lies in the development of the individual person that he is, his manhood lies in finding out by self-study what he is and what he may become, and in wisely using the means that are fitted to form and perfect his individuality." The person who reads as he ought to read, therefore, will try to discover what his best intellectual nature is now, and what it may grow to be in time to come. He will seek to add strength and facility to his mind, and he will constantly strive to correct such tendencies as he finds to be injurious or not positively beneficial, substituting, therefore, as soon as may be, a higher purpose and a more creditable achievement.

We must learn to know books as we learn to know other good things. "Who can overestimate the value of good books?"—asks W. P. Atkinson,—"those ships of thought, as Bacon so finely calls them, voyaging through the sea of time, and carrying their precious freight so safely from generation to generation! Here are the finest minds giving us the best wisdom of present and all past ages; here are intellects gifted far beyond ours, ready to give us the results of lifetimes of patient thought; imaginations open to the beauty of the universe, far beyond what it is given us to behold; characters whom we can only vainly hope to imitate, but whom it is one of the highest privileges of life to know. Here they all are; and to learn to know them is the privilege of the educated man."

We cannot come to know them by accident, or by relying on past habitudes. "When I became a man," said Saint Paul, "I put away childish things"; and so must the manly reader put away the childish habit of reading story-books alone, or looking at pictures, or preferring amusement to instruction and mental development. Too many readers—one is tempted to say the majority of readers—never get beyond the picture-book stage; and, indeed, there are men and women in the world who read fewer books and poorer books than when they were little children.

The great authors are the good authors, in whom feebleness, or coarseness, or whimsicality, or meanness and malice, are accidental rather than essential. When we are reading the master-books we need reject little; we can absorb much. And in our highest and truest moments we may take pride in feeling that we have earned the right to share their greatness, and stand, so to speak, on their level; for it is the apprehension of greatness that makes it great for us, and this very apprehension is an honour to us, and the measure of our own powers and attainments. Emerson does not make an overstatement when he says: "There is something of poverty in our criticism. We assume that there are few great men, all the rest are little; that there is but one Homer, but one Shakespeare, one Newton, one Socrates. But the soul in her beaming hour does not acknowledge these usurpations. We should know how to praise Socrates, or Plato, or Saint John, without impoverishing us. In good hours we do not find Shakespeare or Homer over great —only to have been translators of the happy present—and every man and woman divine possibilities. 'T is the good reader that makes the good book; a good head cannot read amiss; in every book he finds passages which seem confidences or asides hidden from all else and unmistakably meant for his ear."

Behind the book stands the author; if the reader chooses the book or the chapter as he ought, he shares the author's best self and best hours; he associates with a hero rather than a dandy, with an intellectual giant rather than a dwarf; and thereby he shows to what his own tastes have grown. There is truth and wisdom in the aged Victor Hugo's curious and Frenchy, but grave and deep-felt, preface to an edition of his complete works: "Every man who writes, writes a book; that book is himself. Whether he knows it or not, whether he wishes it or not, it is so. From every work, whatever it may be, mean or illustrious, there is shaped a figure, that of the writer. It is his punishment if he be small; it is his recompense if he be great. If we read of the siege of Troy, we see Achilles, Hector, Ulysses, Ajax, Agamemnon; we feel throughout the entire work a majesty which is that of the writer. Has Zoilus written? Let us examine what he has left. He was a grammarian, a commentator, a glossarist: in every line we read: Zoilus. But when the *Iliad* is open before you, you hear the voice of the centuries say: Homer. In the same manner appear to us Æschylus, Aristophanes, Herodotus, Pindar, Theocritus, Plautus, Virgil, Horace, Juvenal, Tacitus, Dante. It is the same with the little; but why name them? The book exists; it is what the author has made it; it is history, philosophy, an epic; it belongs to the loftiest regions of art; it dwells in the lower regions; it is what he is, uncombined, insulated; arising for ever by his side, is this shadow of himself, the figure of the author. Only at the close of a long life, laborious and stormy, given wholly to thought and to action, do these truths reveal themselves. Responsibility, the inseparable companion of liberty, shows itself. The man who traces these lines comprehends them. He is calm. As immovable as if before the Infinite, he is not troubled. To all the questions which ignorance may propound he has but one reply: I am a conscience. This reply every man can make or has made. If he has made it with all the candour of a sincere soul, that suffices. As to him, feeble, ignorant, confined, but having endeavoured to seek the good, he will say without fear to the great darkness, he will say to the unknown, he will say to the mystery: I am a conscience. And he will seem to feel the unity of the life universal in the complete tranquillity of that which is most simple before that which is most profound. There is a supreme talent which is often given alone, which requires none other, which is often concealed, and which has often more power the more it is hidden; this talent is esteem. Of the value of the work here given in its entirety to the public, the future must decide. But that which is certain, that which at present contents the author, is that in these times where we are, in this tumult of opinions, in the violence of prejudice, whatever may be the passions, the anger, the hate, no reader, whoever he may be, if he be himself worthy of esteem, can consider the book without an estimate of the author."

As I have said in a preceding chapter, the cultivation of taste is not hastened, but is seriously retarded, by pretending that one likes what he does not like. Sincerity and honesty are essential, no matter how low may be the present taste, or how serious the problem of elevating it. Nothing is gained by attempting to deceive others, or one's self, in the matter. The very expression of a low or degraded taste stimulates one to endeavour to raise it; whereas deceit or pretense are pretty sure to be transparent, and are even more injurious when successful than when they fail to deceive. A wholesome ignorance can easily be lifted above its former level; but of silly falsehood there is much less hope. A recent writer on "Sham Admiration in Literature" has said that there is a "well-nigh universal habit of literary lying—of a pretense of admiration for certain works of which in reality we know very little, and for which, if we knew more, we should perhaps care less. There are certain books which are standard, and as it were planted in the British soil, before which the majority of us bow the knee and doff the cap with a reverence that, in its ignorance, reminds one of fetish worship, and, in its affectation, of the passion for high art. The works without which, we are told at book auctions, 'no gentleman's library can be considered complete,' are especially the objects of this adoration. . . . A good deal of this mock worship is of course due to abject cowardice. A man who says he does n't like the *Rambler* runs, with some folks, the risk of being thought a fool; but he is sure to be thought that, for something or another, under any circumstances; and, at all events, why should he not content himself, when the *Rambler* is belauded, with holding his tongue, and smiling acquiescence? It must be conceded that there are a few persons who really have read the *Rambler*, a work, of course, I am merely using as a type of its class. In their young days it was used as a schoolbook, and thought necessary as a part of polite education; and as they have read little or nothing since, it is only reasonable that they should stick to their colours. Indeed, the French satirist's boast that he could predicate the views of any man with regard to both worlds, if he were only supplied with the simple data of his age and his income, is quite true, in general, with regard to literary taste. Given the age of the ordinary individual—that is to say of the gentleman 'fond of books, but who has really no time for reading'—and it is easy enough to guess his literary idols. They are the gods of his youth, and, whether he has been 'suckled in a creed outworn' or not, he knows no other. These persons, however, rarely give their opinion about literary matters, except on compulsion; they are harmless and truthful. The tendency of society in general, on the other hand, is not only to praise the *Rambler*, which they have not read, but to express a noble scorn for those who have read it and don't like it." This writer goes on to discuss "hypocrisy in literature" at length, and shows how many are ignorant of, or do not really like, the authors of whom everybody talks; and how their social career is marked by all sorts of equivocations and falsehoods with reference to those authors. "It is partly in consequence of this," he says, "that works, not only of acknowledged but genuine excellence, such as those I have been careful to select, are, though so universally praised, so little read. The poor student attempts them, but failing—from many causes no doubt, but also sometimes from the fact of their not being there—to find those unrivalled beauties which he has been led to expect in every sentence, he stops short, where he would otherwise have gone on. He says to himself, 'I have been deceived,' or 'I must be a born fool'; whereas he is wrong in both suppositions. . . . The habit of mere adhesion to received opinion in any matter is most mischievous, for it strikes at the root of independence of thought; and in literature it tends to make the public taste mechanical." And a taste that is both mechanical and false is surely not likely to be beneficial to society at large or to the individual reader. The remedy proposed by the writer from whom I have quoted is this: "It is not everyone, of course, who has an opinion of his own upon every subject, far less on that of literature; but everyone can abstain from expressing an opinion that is not his own."

Certainly I do not know a better starting-point than this, if one is really desirous of cultivating his taste: Do not pretend to like what you do not like. Do not pretend to know what you do not know. Do not be content with your taste as it is, but try to improve it; not expecting that you will ever like all that great men have written.

For, in the cultivation of literary taste, in ourselves or others, we should not feel that we have failed if we cannot say that we have learned to enjoy all the famous masterpieces of the past. Some books are relatively great—for their time; others absolutely great—for all time. Books may be like mechanical inventions that do their work and then are superseded by better machines. "It is a mistake," says John Morley, "to think that every book that has a great name in the history of books or of thought is worth reading. Some of the most famous books are least worth reading. Their fame was due to their doing something that needed in their day to be done. The work done, the virtue of the book expires." But the perennial freshness of some books is as attractive now as it was when they were written. When one reads Chaucer, "it is as though we were given a chance to live a day five hundred years ago." Shakespeare makes us partners with all humanity. Therefore we should assume—as is the case—that children and youth, with their naturally eager apprehensions, are desirous of good reading and can assimilate it more readily than bad. Chaucer and Shakespeare and the Bible itself are not to be put indiscriminately in all their parts before every reader at all times; but they are perpetual proofs that in the development of taste we are to start with the fact that life interests life.

In that development of taste, as in every other element of mental progress, we cannot get beyond the truth expressed by Lowell: "The better part of every man's education is that which he gives himself."

But the most constant question I am asked by earnest readers is this: "How am I to know whether a book is good or great? I know what I like; sometimes I enjoy books that the critics do not praise, and sometimes, do the best I can, it is impossible for me to read works that every history of English literature calls standard. What must I do about it?"

Well, the whole history of civilised man is a slow attempt to answer this very question, in many fields. What do we mean by the good, the true, the beautiful, the valuable? There 's no disputing about tastes; and definitions of such words as these have to do with taste as well as morals. All we can say about a good or great book is that it is one that the majority of the best and wisest readers, for many years, have agreed to declare good or great. Such judgment, in the long run, is pretty sure to be right. Conscience is the illumination of our minds by the best light we can get from intelligence, experience, advice, and the accumulated wisdom of the past. Good taste in the choice of books is simply the literary conscience applied to the volume in hand.

POETRY

POETRY, said the remarkable singer whose name consisted of the first three letters of the word, is the rhythmical creation of beauty. The definition has never been bettered. Broadly interpreted, it includes orchestral and other music, but the inclusion is illustrative of the origin and of the range of the poetic art. Poetry was the earliest form of literature; rhythmic stress is the very basis of physical law in the natural world; and the beat of the foot in the tribal dance was at one with the accent of the syllable in verse. Later, when the clash of sword on armour, or other metallic sound, emphasised the important word, language had but to introduce alliteration or end-rhyme to produce a similar effect.

All the way from the simplest song of antiquity to the most complicated verse-forms of the modern centuries, poetry combines the music of nature with the motions of the heart. "The poetry of earth is never dead."

"Thou canst not wave thy staff in air,
Or dip the paddle in the lake,
But thou carvest the bow of beauty there,
And the ripples in rhymes the oar forsake."

Poetry is the human cry of love, or exultation, or despair; it is the melody of war and of worship; it is man's call of kinship with the eternal.

Some people read a great deal of poetry, with constant zest and unfailing advantage; others, though they may be "great readers" of other classes of literature, find little pleasure or profit in poetry. Is it a duty to read poetry? Should those who seem to have no natural taste for it endeavour to cultivate a taste, or should they rest content with the conclusion that some minds appreciate, and profit by, poetical compositions, while other minds have no capacity for their enjoyment?

It may not be a downright duty to like poetry, or to try to like it; but certainly it is a misfortune that so large and lovely a division of the world's literature should be lost to any reader. The absence of a poetic taste is a sad indication of a lack of the imaginative faculty; and without imagination what is life? "The study and reading of poetry," says Noah Porter, "exercises and cultivates the imagination, and in this way imparts intellectual power. It is impossible to read the products of any poet's imagination without using our own. To read what he creates is to recreate in our own minds the images and pictures which he first conceived and then expressed in language."

If a reader finds that the ideal has little or no place in his intellectual life or in his daily processes of thought and feeling, then he should consider, with all soberness, the fact that a God-given power is slipping away from him—a power without which his best faculties must become atrophied; without which he loses the greater half of the enjoyment of life, day by day; without which, in very truth, he cannot see all the glory of the open door of the Kingdom of Heaven. Children are poets; they see fairyland in a poor set of toy crockery or in a ragged company of broken-nosed dolls. Their powers of imagination ought never to be lost in the humdrum affairs of a work-a-day world; their habit of finding the real in the ideal is one which cannot be laid aside without great detriment to the individual life and character. There may, then, be persons who "have no capacity for poetry," and who cannot cultivate a taste for it; but this inability, if real, is to be mourned as a mental blindness and deafness, shutting out whole worlds from sight and hearing.

There is, of course, a great deal of imaginative literature which is not poetry, in the technical sense; but if one can read Hawthorne with pleasure, he is quite sure to find no stumbling-block in Coleridge. Between the Scott of *Ivanhoe* and the Scott of *Marmion* there is really no difference. It is the poetic spirit that we should recognise and take to our hearts, whatever be the outward form in which it may be enshrined.

What is the poetic spirit? Many have been the attempts to define it; but, after all, we can only say, in the words Shelley wrote in his *Hymn to the Spirit of Nature:* "All feel, yet see thee never." Or again, is not poetry to be described, as nearly as we may describe it, in two more lines from the same fine poem?—

> "Lamp of Earth, where'er thou movest
> Its dim shapes are clad with brightness."

In W. P. Atkinson's excellent lecture on reading is a passage concerning poetry, which is both imaginative and practical. "I have no thought," says he, "of attempting here a definition of poetry, though I should like to come and give you a lecture on the art of reading it. Whether we call it, with Aristotle, imitation; whether we say more worthily, with Bacon, 'that it was ever thought to have some participation of divineness because it doth raise and erect the mind by submitting the shows of things to the desires of the mind, whereas reason doth buckle and bow the mind unto the nature of things'; whether, in more modern times, we define it, with Shelley, as 'the best and happiest thoughts of the best and happiest minds'; or say, with Matthew Arnold, that 'poetry is simply the most beautiful, impressive and widely effective mode of saying things'; and, again, that 'it is to the poetical literature of an age that we must in general look for the most perfect and the most adequate interpretation of that age'; or whether we say, with the greatest poet of the last generation, that 'poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge, the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science'—all I am concerned to say here is, that poetry is that branch of the literature of power pre-eminently worthy of study, and that without study we shall know but little about it."

We need not think, then, that the reading of poetry is a matter of whim or accident, to be undertaken without thought or study. The beginning of its love rests in the individual mind; for its development he must seek his material from the treasures around him, and must work out his methods of utilising that material with the same care—or even greater—which he applies to other departments of intellectual exercise. Let him, if he finds his taste in need of cultivation, begin with such poems as he likes; read them more than once; learn their teachings; apprehend their inner spirit and purpose. Whatever the beginning, it is sure to lead to something better, if the reader will but resolutely determine to know what the writer meant to say; to see the picture that he portrayed, or to share his enthusiasm and warmth of feeling.

Mr. G. J. Goschen, the English banker and political economist, declared the cultivation of the imagination to be essential to the highest success in politics, in learning, and in the commercial business of life. No one is too dull, or too prosaic, or too much absorbed in the routine of "practical life" to be absolved from the care of his imaginative powers; and no one is likely to find that this care will not repay him even in a practical sense. He who thinks wisely, he who perceives quickly that which others do not see at all, is better equipped for any work than one whose mind works slowly and feebly, and whose apprehensions have grown rusty from disuse.

Poetry is not for the few, but for the many, for all. The world's great poems, almost without exception, have been poems whose meaning has been perfectly clear and whose language has been simple,—poems which have addressed themselves to the plain and common sense of the ages. Homer, and Virgil, and Dante, and Goethe, and Hugo, and Chaucer, and Shakespeare need no mystical commentary to explain their meaning; like Mark Antony, they " only speak right on." If a poet has not made himself clear, it is his fault and not yours, if you have sincerely endeavoured to appreciate the noblest things in thought and life. Sunlight, air, water—these are not for the few; nor is poetry to be cooped and confined any more than these.

Principal Shairp thus speaks of this inherent quality of the best poetry—a quality which all men may apprehend if they will: "The pure style is that which, whether it describes a scene, a character, or a sentiment, lays hold of its inner meaning, not its surface; the type which the thing embodies, not the accidents; the core or heart of it, not the accessories. . . . Descriptions of this kind, while they convey typical conceptions, yet retain perfect individuality. They are done by a few strokes, in the fewest possible words; but each stroke tells, each word goes home. Of this kind is the poetry of the Psalms and of the Hebrew prophets. It is seen in the brief, impressive way in which Dante presents the heroes or heroines of his nether world, as compared with Virgil's more elaborate pictures. In all of Wordsworth that has really impressed the world, this will be found to be the chief characteristic. It is seen especially in his finest lyrics and his most impressive sonnets. Take only three poems that stand together in his works: *Glen Almain*, *Stepping Westward*, *The Solitary Reaper.* In each you have a scene and its sentiment brought home with the minimum of words, the maximum of power. It is distinctive of the pure style that it relies not on side effects, but on the total impression—that it produces a unity in which all the parts are subordinated to one paramount aim. The imagery is appropriate, never excessive. You are not distracted by glaring single lines or too splendid images. There is one tone, and that all-pervading—reducing all the materials, however diverse, into harmony with the one total result designed. This style in its perfection is not to be attained by any rules of art. The secret of it lies further in than rules of art can reach, even in this: that the writer sees his object, and this only; feels the sentiment of it, and this only; is so absorbed in it, lost in it, that he altogether forgets himself and his style, and cares only in fewest, most vital words to convey to others the vision his own soul sees. . . . The ornate style in poetry is altogether different from this. No doubt the multitude of uneducated and half-educated readers, which every day increases, loves a highly ornamented, not to say a meretricious, style both in literature and in the arts; and if these demand it, writers and artists will be found to furnish it. There remains, therefore, to the most educated the task of counterworking this evil. With them it lies to elevate the thought and to purify the taste of less cultivated readers, and so to remedy one of the evils incident to democracy. To high thinking and noble living the pure style is natural. But these things are severe; require moral bracing; minds not luxurious but which can endure hardness. Softness, self-pleasing, and moral limpness find their congenial element in excess of highly-coloured ornamentation. On the whole, when once a man is master of himself and of his materials, the best rule that can be given him is to forget style altogether, and to think only of the reality to be expressed. The more the mind is intent on the reality, the simpler, truer, more telling the style will be. The advice which the great preacher gives for conduct holds not less for all kinds of writing: 'Aim at things, and your words will be right without aiming. Guard against love of display, love of singularity, love of seeming original. Aim at meaning what you say, and saying what you mean.' When a man who is full of his subject and has matured his powers of expression sets himself to speak thus simply and sincerely, whatever there is in him of strength or sweetness, of dignity or grace, of humour or pathos, will find its way out naturally into his language. That language will be true to his thought, true to the man himself.''

How different is such poetical language from the poetry of the obscure, or the mock-sentimental, or the positively base! What the *Saturday Review* said of Byron is true of many another poet: " Even Byron's best passages will not stand critical examination. They excite rather than transport, and when the reader examines seriously what he has felt, the impression of a vague contagious excitement is all that he retains. In reading Byron, the reader dimly feels that he is in the presence of a very eloquent person who is, or would like to be thought, in a state of great excitement about something, and that it is his duty to become excited too."

True poetry has a far nobler mission than to puzzle, or to amuse, or to excite; it is the voice of all that is best in humanity, speaking from man to man. Not all of us can thus speak, but we all can listen to the poet's song, and incorporate his message in our best and truest life, day by day.

These remarks apply, of course, to the best of literature in any form ; but poetry has been, on the whole, the quintessence of literature. The prose tale, indeed, has become for the twentieth century, in its soul and in its form, what poetry was for the early years of the nineteenth; but when we look at the books of the past we see that authors, when they have wished to express themselves with peculiar elevation, or strength, or passion, or beauty, have naturally turned to verse. "Have you ever rightly considered," says Lowell, "what the mere ability to read means? That it is the key which admits us to the whole world of thought and fancy and imagination? to the company of saint and sage, of the wisest and the wittiest at their wisest and wittiest moment? That it enables us to see with the keenest eyes, hear with the finest ears, and listen to the sweetest voices of all time? More than that, it annihilates time and space for us; it revives for us without a miracle the Age of Wonder." To listen to the sweetest voices of all time—that is the perennial privilege of the reader of poetry, especially if, like the men and women of a wiser generation than ours, he memorises it.

In the opinion of John Morley, "the great need in modern culture, which is scientific in method, rationalistic in spirit, and utilitarian in purpose, is to find some effective agency for cherishing within us the ideal. That is, I take it, the business and function of literature. . . . After all, the thing that matters most, both for happiness and for duty, is that we should habitually live with wise thoughts and right feelings. Literature helps us more than other studies to this most blessed companionship."

To cherish the ideal within us; to live with wise thoughts and right feelings—that is what the best poets ask of us, and unweariedly they proffer their aid toward this noble end. "The poet in showing the individual must suggest the universal, in speaking of the seen must seem to speak also of the unseen, must deal with time as if he touched eternity." [1]

[1] J. C. Bailey, *The Anglo-Saxon Review*, March, 1901.

THE ART OF SKIPPING

IT is a fortunate thing that one of the most hackneyed quotations concerning books and reading should also be one of the most sensible: Lord Bacon's saying that "Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested; that is, some books are to be read only in parts; others to be read, but not curiously; and some few to be read wholly, and with diligence and attention."

Following this piece of advice has done a great deal of good; and no harm is likely to come from its wise observance. Some people profess to believe that a book that is worth reading at all is worth reading straight through,—a piece of foolishness that would be paralleled by an insistence upon eating a tableful every time one sits down to a meal. A person who makes up his mind to read all of a book or none must be fully convinced of the solemn truth of the saying that "a book 's a book, although there 's nothing in 't." Against such lack of wisdom the sturdy common-sense of Lord Bacon's remark may be put. The reader need but rest assured of its unquestionable truth, and spend his time in trying to discover what books are to be tasted, what swallowed, and what digested, rather than vex his soul in questioning whether the general advice is sound or not.

A book that is worth reading all through is pretty sure to make its worth known. There is something in the literary conscience which tells a reader whether he is wasting his time or not. An hour or a minute may be sufficient opportunity for forming a decision concerning the worth or worthlessness of the book. If it is utterly bad and valueless, then skip the whole of it, as soon as you have made the discovery. If a part is good and a part bad, accept the one and reject the other. If you are in doubt, take warning at the first intimation that you are misspending your opportunity and frittering away your time over an unprofitable book. Reading that is of questionable value is not hard to find out; it bears its notes and marks in unmistakable plainness, and it puts forth, all unwittingly, danger signals of which the reader should take heed.

The art of skipping is, in a word, the art of noting and shunning that which is bad, or frivolous, or misleading, or unsuitable for one's individual needs. If you are convinced that the book or chapter is bad, you cannot drop it too quickly. If it is simply idle and foolish, put it away on that account,—unless you are properly seeking amusement from idleness and frivolity. If it is deceitful and disingenuous, your task is not so easy, but your literary conscience will give you warning, and the sharp examination which should follow will tell you that you are in poor literary company.

But there are a great many books which are good in themselves, and yet are not good at all times or for all readers. No book, indeed, is of universal value and appropriateness. As has been said in previous chapters of this series, the individual must always dare to remember that he has his own legitimate tastes and wants, and that it is improper to permit them to be overruled by the tastes and wants of others. It is right for one to neglect entirely, or to skip through, pages which another should study again and again. Let each reader unconsciously ask himself: Why am I reading this? What service will it be to me? Am I neglecting something else that would be more beneficial? Here, as in every other question involved in the choice of books, the golden key to knowledge, a key that will only fit its own proper doors, is purpose.

Thus the reader is the pupil and the companion and the fellow-worker of the author, not his slave. "It is a wise book that is good from title-page to the end," says A. Bronson Alcott. Such a book should be read through; but the books that are wise in spots should be read in spots. Again, Mr. Alcott says: "I value books for their suggestiveness even more than for the information they may contain;—volumes that may be taken in hand and laid aside, read at odd moments, containing sentences that take possession of my thought and prompt to the following of them into their wider relations with life and things." This suggestiveness of books read at odd moments is one of the great advantages of judicious skipping. From this habit comes, often, a riper and wholesomer harvest than would spring from the most painstaking devotion to regulated and routine reading and study. One page, one sentence, thus planted in the fertile soil of a receptive mind, is better than a whole library read from a mere sense of duty, and without reference to one's own true welfare, as indicated by his nature and his needs.

No one thus wisely choosing what he may best read is in any danger of becoming a superficial reader. "Did you ever happen to see," asks a writer whose name I have unfortunately lost,—"did you ever happen to see, in shrewd old hard-headed Bishop Whately's annotations on Lord Bacon's essays, a good passage about what is and what is not superficiality? It is in the sentence in Bacon's *Essay on Studies*, 'Crafty men contemn studies.' This contempt, says the bishop, 'whether of crafty men or narrow-minded men, finds its expression in the word *smattering*,' and the couplet is become almost a proverb:

> " 'A little learning is a dangerous thing:
> Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring.'

But the poet's remedies for the dangers of a little learning are both of them impossible. No one can drink deep enough to be in truth anything more than superficial; and every human being that is not a downright idiot must taste. And the bishop, in his downright way, goes on to give practical illustrations of the usefulness of a little knowledge, and proceeds: 'What, then, is the smattering, the imperfect and superficial knowledge that does deserve contempt? A slight and superficial knowledge is justly condemned when it is put in the place of more full and exact knowledge. Such an acquaintance with chemistry and anatomy, for instance, as would be creditable and not useless to a lawyer, would be contemptible for a physician; and such an acquaintance with law as would be desirable for him, would be a most discreditable smattering for a lawyer.' "

Hamerton has some good words on this subject: " It becomes a necessary part," says he, " of the art of intellectual living, so to order our work as to shield ourselves if possible, at least during a certain portion of our time, from the evil consequences of hurry. The whole secret lies in a single word—selection. . . . The art is to select the reading which will be most useful to our purpose, and, in writing, to select the words which will express our meaning with the greatest clearness in a little space. The art of reading is to skip judiciously. Whole libraries may be skipped in these days, when we have the results of them in our modern culture without going over the ground again. And even of the books we decide to read, there are almost always large portions which do not concern us, and which we are sure to forget the day after we have read them. The art is to skip all that does not concern us, whilst missing nothing that we really need. No external guidance can teach us this; for nobody but ourselves can guess what the needs of our intellect may be. But let us select with decisive firmness, independently of other people's advice, independently of the authority of custom.''

Of course it follows that, to some extent, we can let others do the work of selection for us, subject to correction whenever necessary. ''In comparing the number of good books with the shortness of life, many might well be read by proxy, if we had good proxies,'' says Emerson. Sensible literary guides must be followed to a large extent, whether in their recommendation of one book as against another, or of certain poems or prose extracts in comparison with others. Books of selection, it is true, sometimes omit things we would have greatly liked; but who will pretend to say that he always finds everything that would have pleased or profited him, even when he makes his own choice? As no worker in any field of labour can, in this social world, dispense with the help of others, so it is especially necessary for readers to follow the guidance of pioneers and wise critics, and to make use of the selections these critics have made, as well as their indication of whole books. And sometimes, as Emerson's remark (which follows Bacon's " Some books may be read by deputy, and extracts from them made by others") shows us, we may not only delegate to others the work of choice and selection, but also that of reading itself.

THE USE OF TRANSLATIONS

A FEW words concerning the use of translations of the masterpieces of other languages may properly be given here, because it is a subject concerning which most guides to reading have nothing whatever to say and to which the majority of intelligent readers, even, have given very little thought. Great as is the neglect of good reading in one's own language, still greater is the lack of attention to English translations of the noble books of other literatures than our own.

An intelligent comprehension of one's needs in the choice of books should certainly include due attention to the literature of France, or Germany, or Italy, or Greece, or Spain;—or, in other words, such a comprehension should never forget that good literature is not an insular affair, bounded by the limits of one country, or by the letters of one language. Of course it is both natural and proper that the greater part of our reading should be of books of American or English authorship;

but our culture and training will be greatly impoverished if, because of a partial or complete unfamiliarity with the languages in which they wrote, we take no account of Homer, Virgil, Dante, Cervantes, Goethe, Hugo.

Speaking in general terms, the entire body of the best literature of other lands is accessible in adequate English translations. And of the use which may be made of them, let Emerson speak, in one of the most familiar passages of his essay on books: "The respectable and sometimes excellent translations of Bohn's Library have done for literature what railroads have done for internal intercourse. I do not hesitate to read all the books I have named, and all good books, in translations. What is really best in any book is translatable—any real insight or broad human sentiment. Nay, I observe that, in our Bible, and other books of lofty moral tone, it seems easy and inevitable to render the rhythm and music of the original into phrases of equal melody. The Italians have a fling at translators—*i traditori traduttori;* but I thank them. I rarely read any Greek, Latin, German, Italian, sometimes not a French book, in the original, which I can procure in a good version. I like to be beholden to the great metropolitan English speech, the sea which receives tributaries from every region under heaven. I should as soon think of swimming across Charles River when I wish to go to Boston, as of reading all my books in originals, when I have them rendered for me in my mother-tongue.''

If such a man as Emerson thus recognises the utility of translations, surely the average reader cannot afford to ignore them; whether from his feeling that he must read books in the original or not at all, or because he carelessly permits himself to forget that vast land which lies beyond the bounds of his immediate literary horizon.

Mr. Emerson was one of the scholarly men of his age; an author who in an especial degree made the wisdom of all times pay tribute to him. If any contemporary writer could properly be ''above'' reading translations, he might be supposed to be that one; and yet he took advanced ground in the matter, and spoke ten times as boldly as a mere village pedant would dare to speak. Let us also hear what Hamerton has to say on the same subject—bearing in mind that his testimony is of special value, because he might well be thought likely to take exactly the contrary view, inasmuch as he lived in France and England, and used the French and English languages with absolute indifference. He says: "Mature life brings so many professional or social duties that it leaves scant time for culture, and those who care for culture most earnestly and sincerely are the very persons who will economise time to the utmost. Now, to read a language that has been very imperfectly mastered is felt to be a bad economy of time. Suppose the case of a man occupied in business who has studied Greek rather assiduously in youth and yet not enough to read Plato with facility. He can read the original, but he reads it so slowly that it would cost him more hours than he can spare, and this is why he has recourse to a translation. In this case there is no indifference to Greek culture; on the contrary, the reader desires to assimilate what he can of it, but the very earnestness of his wish to have free access to ancient thought makes him prefer it in modern language."

Hamerton also points out effectively that even an intelligent and apparently deep study of another language may not bring with it an insight into its spirit, or a true knowledge of its richest treasures: "Suppose a society of Frenchmen, in some secluded little French village, where no Englishman ever penetrates, and that these Frenchmen learn English from dictionaries, and set themselves to speak English with each other, without anybody to teach them the colloquial language or its pronunciation, without ever once hearing the sound of it from English lips, what sort of English would they create among themselves? This is a question that I happen to be able to answer very accurately, because I have known two Frenchmen who studied English literature just as the Frenchmen of the sixteenth century studied the literature of ancient Rome. One of them, especially, had attained what would certainly in the case of a dead language be considered a very high degree of scholarship indeed. Most of our great authors were known to him, even down to the close critical comparison of different readings. Aided by the most powerful memory I ever knew, he had amassed such stores that the acquisitions even of cultivated Englishmen would in many cases have appeared inconsiderable beside them. But he could not write or speak English in a manner tolerable to an Englishman; and although he knew nearly all the words in the language, it was dictionary knowledge, and so different from an Englishman's apprehension of the same words that it was only a sort of pseudo-English that he knew, and not our living tongue. His appreciation of our authors, especially our poets, differed so widely from English criticism and feeling that it was evident that he did not understand them as we understand them. Two things especially proved this: he frequently mistook declamatory versification for poetry of an elevated order; whilst, on the other hand, his ear failed to perceive the music of the musical poets, as Byron and Tennyson. How could he hear their music, he to whom our English sounds were all unknown? Here, for example, is the way he read *Claribel:*

"At ev ze bittle bommess
   Azvart ze zeeket lon
At none ze veeld be ommess
   Aboot ze most edston
At meedneeg ze mon commess
   An lokez dovn alon
Ere songg ze lintveet svelless
Ze clirvoiced mavi dvelless
   Ze fledgling srost lispess
Ze slombroos vav ootvelless
   Ze babblang ronnel creespess
Ze ollov grot replee-ess
Vere Claribel lovlee-ess."

Plainly, then, "liberally educated" people, as such, have no right to affect superiority over those persons who venture to assert that English translations of foreign works are not only permissible reading, but that they sometimes convey a far better idea of foreign literature than may be obtained from any save the most complete and successful study of other tongues. The average college graduate is almost certain to be a mere baby in his knowledge of the ancient and modern literature of Europe, though he may have professed to study Latin six or seven years, Greek four or five years, and French and German scarcely less. Of this study, fully nine-tenths has been of grammatical forms, and etymological niceties, and syntactical constructions; and his translating has been done by piecemeal, in such a way as to destroy pretty effectually all idea of the largeness and noble quality of the text in hand—and still more of the literature of which that text is a part. Etymology is not literature; syntax is not literature; the conjugation of a verb is not literature. They may or may not be the gateways of an adequate knowledge of literature;—more often they are not, in our usual scheme of college education. Whatever advantages may be derived from the grammatical study of a language—and they are great, perhaps essential—the student should not imagine that grammatical study, unsupplemented by something more, is literary study. I am not decrying grammar. I am only saying that philology is one thing, and a knowledge of the spirit and life of a foreign literature is quite another thing. There are old and eminent colleges at the North which do far less toward leading their students toward the literatures of their own and other languages than is done by more than one small and feeble institution at the West or South. So far as literary culture is concerned, then, these venerable and illustrious colleges are failures, and these new and feebly equipped "universities" of newer communities are successes. An institution of learning which fetters its classes in chains whose links are mere grammatical niceties is not to be accounted a literary institution at all, in comparison with one which directs its students to the fair fields of *belles-lettres*, and strives to imbue them with the idea that the spirit and life of Homer is something beyond and above the anatomy of the Greek verb.

Every reader, whether college bred or not, whether he can read his Bible in half a dozen languages or in English alone, should therefore remember that it is his bounden duty to know somewhat of the world's literature. If he can know it at first hand, in the original tongue, so much the better; but if, as must usually happen, he must look to English translations, let him not forget that a Keats, who knew not a word of Greek, got nearer the heart of Greek literature than a hundred Porsons could ever do.

HOW TO READ PERIODICALS

IT is, of course, unadvisable to attempt to regulate one's plans of reading with the intention of leaving out newspapers and other periodicals, as " wastes of time." No doubt the average book is more profitable reading than the average copy of a newspaper; but it by no means follows that the best book is at all times a better thing to read than the best newspaper. In this age of many periodicals, a large share of the best literature first appears in them; and, aside from literature proper, one's scheme of reading is defective if it takes no account of the news of the day. A reader has no right to be well acquainted with ancient history, or with the treasures of poetry or romance, if such acquaintance has been purchased at the price of ignorance of the great events and the leading principles of contemporary life.

In Hamerton's *Intellectual Life*—a book from which I have already quoted so many times as to show my appreciation of it as a sensible helper to sound habits of mental regimen on the part of the average reader—is a chapter addressed " to a friend (highly cultivated) who congratulated himself on having entirely abandoned the habit of reading newspapers." Mr. Hamerton admits that this friend will have a definite gain to show for whatever may be his loss; and that some five hundred hours a year will be saved to him as a time-income which may be applied to whatever purpose he may select. " In those five hundred hours," says he to his friend, " which are now your own, you may acquire a science, or obtain a more perfect command over one of the languages which you have studied. Some department of your intellectual labours which has hitherto been unsatisfactory to you, because it was too imperfectly cultivated, may henceforth be as orderly and as fruitful as a well-kept garden. You may become thoroughly conversant with the works of more than one great author whom you have neglected, not from lack of interest, but for want of time." But against these gains must be set the loss of political and social intelligence; of the ability to deal with the practical questions of the life in which one lives; and of a large part of that community of knowledge which is so essential to the right development of a mind and of a character. In a word, total abstinence from the reading of periodicals must make a person to some extent both ignorant and selfish. "He who has not learned to read his daily newspaper," says W. P. Atkinson, "will hardly read Gibbon and Grote to any purpose; he who cannot see history in the streets of Boston will trouble himself to no purpose with books about Rome or Pompeii."

Admitting thus the utility of the reading of periodicals, and even insisting upon the necessity and duty of reading them, it must nevertheless be recognised that an alarming amount of time is wasted over them, or worse than wasted. When we have determined that newspapers and magazines ought to be read, let us by no means flatter ourselves that all our reading of them is commendable or justifiable. I am quite safe in saying that the individual who happens to be reading these lines wastes more than half the time that he devotes to periodicals; and that he wastes it because he does not regulate that time as he ought. "To learn to choose what is valuable and to skip the rest" is a good rule for reading periodicals; and it is a rule whose observance will reduce by fully one half the time devoted to them, and will save time and strength for better intellectual employments,—to say nothing of the important fact that discipline in this line will prevent the reader from falling into that demoralising and altogether disgraceful inability to hold the mind upon any continuous subject of thought or study, which is pretty sure to follow in the train of undue or thoughtless reading of periodicals. And when, as too often happens, a man comes to read nothing save his morning paper at breakfast or on the train, and his evening paper after his day's work is over, that man's brain, so far as reading is concerned, is only half alive. It cannot carry on a long train of thought or study; it notes superficial things rather than inner principles; it seeks to be amused or stimulated, rather than to be instructed.

How, then, shall we set to work to put in practice the important truth that " one should use the newspaper as a servant and not as a master " ?

In the first place, many periodicals are not worth reading at all. They neither instruct nor profitably amuse. If not avowedly addressed to the semi-criminal class, they assume that their readers are chiefly interested in murders, divorces, and court-room proceedings. In their columns any real apprehension of the nobility and beauty of life seems lacking, save when some clergyman or moralist is induced to write a signed article for the editorial page. The habitual reading of such papers is enough, in itself, to lower one's intelligence and moral sense, and to keep them low. These are strong words; but if the reading of certain papers I could name, and which my readers could name, does not have this effect, it is due to the reader rather than to the newspaper.

In the reading of papers which are worthy of being read, we should bring every article or item, so far as may be, before the tribunal of our intellectual conscience, and demand of it what is its purpose, and what its utility to ourselves. If a thing is useless to us, then we may advantageously let it alone. A paper or a magazine is not all for everybody; some things in it are for you, some for me, some for others. We can readily tell what belongs to us and what to somebody else. Again, in the things which we may properly read, we should bear it in mind not to exceed the proper proportion of time to be devoted to a particular subject. It is often enough to know that an event has taken place, without reading all the particulars. Newspapers are pretty sure to violate the true perspective of events, and their violation of perspective we must correct for ourselves. Some of the best of our Saturday or Sunday dailies, with thirty or forty pages of really excellent reading matter, need to be watched on the ground that their "history of the world for one day" is dangerously diffuse.

James Russell Lowell used to say to his lifelong friend Charles F. Briggs that the reading of a certain daily newspaper gave him all he cared to know about current events. Such a daily—or one of the best weeklies still made up from the cream of seven daily issues—is enough; and it need not demand, for its intelligent perusal, more than half an hour a day. Skip crimes, athletic news, and unimportant local "intelligence," and you reduce the contents of even the best of our newspapers from one third to one half. Mr. Lowell, in a later utterance, the sense of which excuses his inevitable mixture of metaphors, said: "We are apt to wonder at the scholarship of the men of three centuries ago and at a certain dignity of phrase that characterises them. They were scholars because they did not read so many things as we. They had fewer books, but these were of the best. Their speech was noble, because they lunched with Plutarch and supped with Plato. We spend as much time over print as they did, but instead of communing with the choice thoughts of choice spirits, and unconsciously acquiring the grand manner of that supreme society, we diligently inform ourselves, and cover the continent with a cobweb of telegraphs to inform us, of such inspiring facts as that a horse belonging to Mr. Smith ran away on Wednesday, seriously damaging a valuable carryall; that a son of Mr. Brown swallowed a hickory nut on Thursday; and that a gravel bank caved in and buried Mr. Robinson alive on Friday. Alas, it is we ourselves that are getting buried alive under this avalanche of earthy impertinence! It is we who, while we might each in his humble way be helping our fellows into the right path, or adding one block to the climbing spire of a fine soul, are willing to become mere sponges saturated from the stagnant goose-pond of village gossip. This is the kind of news we compass the globe to catch, fresh from Bungtown Centre, when we might have it fresh from heaven by the electric lines of poet or prophet! It is bad enough that we should be compelled to know so many nothings, but it is downright intolerable that we must wash so many barrow-loads of gravel to find a grain of mica after all. And then to be told that the ability to read makes us all shareholders in the Bonanza Mine of Universal Intelligence!"

Tolstoi, late in life, gave up the reading of all periodicals, saying: "While familiar with our newspapers, we neglect the real pabulum of literature." Thus, in the first two months of abstinence, he read from "Marcus Aurelius, Epictetus, Xenophanes, Socrates, Brahman, Chinese and Buddhist wisdom, Seneca, Plutarch, Cicero, and, of the moderns, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Voltaire, Lessing, Kant, Lichtenberg, Schopenhauer, Emerson, Channing, Parker, Ruskin, and others."

One valuable help toward reducing the time we spend over newspapers is to keep in check the attention we are all too ready to give to speculations as to what may happen if certain contingencies arise in the future. "A large proportion of newspaper writing," says Hamerton, "is occupied with speculations on what is likely to happen in the course of a few months; therefore, by waiting until the time is past, we know the event without having wasted time in speculations which could not affect it." We should put ourselves in the position of one who bears in mind the "long result of time," as well as the particular duties and experiences of the day. The cultivation of this principle will also do much to remove the dangerous influence of an undue devotion to the ephemeral excitements and bitterness of partisan politics, in which newspapers of course play an active part. Hamerton even goes so far as to advise the avoidance of all literature that has a controversial tone. This is urging more than is practicable, or advisable; but we can at least read newspapers in such a manner that we need not be ashamed of ourselves after election-day.

As for the reading of magazines and reviews, and of newspapers which are devoted to comment and criticism rather than news, it need only be said that the time spent over them should be watched somewhat less strictly, and that the following of the same principle of purpose of which we have spoken so often will make easy the selection of articles.

READING ALOUD, AND READING CLUBS

"HOW should we read?" asks an old-time authority, who proceeds to answer the question in four replies: "First, thoughtfully and critically; secondly, in company with a friend, or your family; thirdly, repeatedly; fourthly, with pen in hand."

Reading aloud, in the company of others—the practice commended in the second of these rules—is in every way advantageous. Its least important advantage is nevertheless highly salutary, that it affords valuable means for training in the elocutionary art—an art in which the modern American youth is inferior to his grandparents; and, aside from this, it promotes thought, it stimulates one mind by contact with another; and it almost inevitably calls forth, by discussion, acts and opinions which otherwise would not have been considered.

In an over-severe attack on the alleged decline and inutility of the entire public school system, the late Richard Grant White offered some suggestions on the training of classes in the art of reading aloud, which are so sound and sensible that they may well be repeated here for general readers as well as educators.

"Of all knowledge and mental training," said Mr. White, "reading is in our day the principal means, and reading aloud intelligently the unmistakable, if not the only, sign. Yet this, which was so common when the present generation of mature men were boys, is just what our highly and scientifically educational educators seem either most incapable or most neglectful of teaching. And yet the means by which children were made intelligent and intelligible readers, thirty-five or forty years ago, were not so recondite as to be beyond attainment and use by a teacher of moderate abilities and acquirement, who set himself earnestly to his work. As I remember it, this was the way in which we were taught to read with pleasure to ourselves and with at least satisfaction to our hearers: Boys of not more than seven to nine years old were exercised in defining words from an abridged dictionary. The word was spelled and the definition given from memory, and then the teacher asked questions which tested the pupil's comprehension of the definition that he had given, and the members of the class, never more than a dozen or fourteen in number, were encouraged to give in their own language their notion of the word and to distinguish it from so-called synonyms. As to the amount of knowledge that was thus gained, it was very little—little, at least, in comparison with the value of this exercise as education, that is, of mental training, which was very great. The same class read aloud every day, and the books that they read were of sufficient interest to tempt boys to read them of themselves. . . .

"When the reading began all the class were obliged to follow the reader, each in his own book; for any pupil was liable to be called upon to take up the recitation, even at an unfinished sentence, and go on with it; and if he hesitated in such a manner as showed that his eye and mind were not with the reader's, the effect upon his mark account was the same as if he himself had failed in reading. If the reading of any sentence did not show a just apprehension of its meaning, the reader was stopped and the sentence was passed through the class for a better expression of its sense. Whether this was obtained from the pupils or not, the teacher then explained the sense or gave some information, the want of which had caused the failure, and by repetition of both readings—the bad and the good—showed by contrast and by comment why the one was bad and why the other good. Words were explained; if they were compound words they were analysed; the different shades of meaning which words have in different connections were remarked upon, and the subject of the essay, the narration, or the poem which formed the lesson of the day was explained. The delivery of the voice was attended to; not in any pretentious, artificial, elocutionary way, but with such regard for good and pleasant speech as was dictated by common sense and good breeding. The young readers were not allowed to hang their heads either over their bosoms or over their shoulders, but were made to stand up straight, throw back their shoulders, lift their heads well up, so that if their eyes were taken from their books, they would look a man straight in the face. Only in this position can the voice be well delivered. The slightest mispronunciation was, of course, observed and corrected, and not only so, but bad enunciation was checked, and all slovenly mumbling was reprehended, and as far as possible reformed. Yet with all this there was constant caution against a prim, pedantic, and even a conscious mode of reading. The end sought was an intelligent, natural, and simple delivery of every sentence.

" Of course, a lesson in reading like this was no trifling matter. It was, indeed, the longest recitation of the session, and the one at which the instructive powers of the teacher were most severely tested. But it was the most valuable, the most important lesson of the day. By it the pupil was taught not only to read well and speak well, but to think. His powers of attention and apprehension were put in exercise, and he was obliged to discriminate shades of meaning before he could express them by inflection of voice. Reading aloud well was then regarded as inferior in importance to no other ' branch ' of education; it was practised until pupils were prepared to enter college, the later reading lessons being taken from Milton or Pope or Burke, or some other writers of the highest class, and being again accompanied by explanation and criticism. In the earlier years of a boy's school-time any other recitation would be omitted by the teacher sooner than that in reading aloud. How it is, or why it is, that such instruction in reading has fallen into disuse I do not know. Indeed, I know that it is disused only by the chorus of complaint that goes up on all sides, both in England and in the United States, that children cannot read aloud, and that they cannot write from dictation. This, of course, could not be if children were taught in the manner which I have endeavoured to describe. A schoolboy of eight or nine years old, if taught in that way, would know how to read English aloud decently well, if he knew nothing else. And it is really more important that he should know how to do this well, and that he should learn to do it in some such manner as I have described, than that he should begin the study of the arts and sciences.''

In this connection there occurs to the mind a single verse of the Bible, which comprises, in twenty-three words, a whole treatise on the art of reading aloud: '' So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading.''

This is not the place for any long discussion of the externals, so to speak, of reading aloud. As we have said, reading in the home circle, or literary clubs, closely unites mere elocutionary practice with a new apprehension of the sense of what is read, and promotes in a high degree the growth of the culture of all the persons who take part in it. Fortunately, the habit is being revived of late years, both at home and in associations of readers. It can be taken up at any time: nothing is easier than to find listeners more than willing to be read to; and the custom will prove to repay cultivation to an unlimited extent. Of course reading aloud is slower work than reading to one's self; but the advantages of deliberate thought, and of a fellowship with the minds of others, more than make up this loss.

Some helpful hints on social literary work for women—hints which apply, for the most part, equally well to men, or to the literary clubs composed of both sexes—may well be reprinted here, from *The Christian Union.*

"In every community," says the journal, "there are intelligent women, with considerable leisure at their command, who have a desire to be helpful, and in the same community there is a class of young women who need intellectual stimulus and guidance. How shall the two be brought together, so that the supply shall meet the demand? Newspapers, magazines, and public libraries all serve an admirable purpose in the intellectual life of the community, but they are not sufficient. What is needed is personal influence and power, and this is just the element which intelligent women are able to supply.

"Almost every village, certainly every larger town, contains a number of recent graduates from high schools and seminaries, who are not able, for one reason or another, to complete their school education by a full college course. Now, to girls of this class, a woman of tact and intelligence can render the greatest possible service by helping them to preserve the habits of study they have already formed and to keep alive the intellectual interest and curiosity that have been awakened in them; and by giving them just that impulse which shall keep them drinking continually at the running streams of knowledge. The training of the best schools fails unless it emphasises the importance of continual and systematic study as the habit of a lifetime; but it is just this which large numbers of bright and promising graduates from the higher schools fail to carry away with them. They go home from their last term with a latent desire for fuller knowledge, but that desire is not strong enough to carry them through the interruptions home life brings to a regular course of study, and what they need is an impulse from without, and the guidance of some mature and trained mind. Any intelligent woman can find a noble work for herself by opening her doors to girls of this class, and providing in her home a kind of post-graduate course for them. No study and no teaching is so delightful as that which is full of the element of personality, in which teacher and scholars meet on a social basis, and as friends mutually interested in the same work, in which the methods are entirely informal and conversational, and the result the largest and freest discussion of the subject. An experiment of this kind need not be a heavy task on the teacher either in time or effort. A class may be formed which shall meet for an hour once or twice a week, taking any subject for study that has vital connection with life. . . .

"No subject will be more entertaining in itself or open up so many paths of private reading and study as English literature. An excellent plan would be to take Stopford Brooke's *Primer of English Literature* as a connecting thread of study, and with it as a guide to make the grand tour of English literature, taking each great author in his turn and making such study of his life and work as would be within the power of an ordinarily intelligent person. Different authors may be assigned to different members of the class, who shall specially study up and give account of them, so that the principal facts of their lives, the special qualities of their work and the particular impulse which they imparted to their age may be made the possession of the whole class. Then there is the great field of art, which by the aid of the admirable textbooks now being published may be intelligently and profitably traversed by those who have no opportunities for technical knowledge, but who desire to know art in its historical aspects, and to be able by knowledge of its historical development to understand the school of the present day. These hints will suggest a multiplicity of topics that might with the utmost profit be studied in this way. Every woman who desires to make the experiment can easily settle the question of what subject she shall take, by consulting her own culture, her own tastes, and the needs of those whom she wishes to help. The special knowledge to be imparted is not of so much value as the habit of study, which is to be strengthened and made continuous in the life of the student."

This is an exact description of what, to my knowledge, has frequently been done in classes of young women in villages,—many of whom have enjoyed slender opportunities for education, and nearly all of whom have earned their own living. In these classes, reading aloud by the members has been a constant feature.

In the formation of classes like those indicated above, or Shakespeare clubs, or social literary organisations in general, two things should never be forgotten: that almost any kind of a beginning is better than none; and that the constitution and by-laws of the society, if it is deemed necessary to have any, should be of the simplest character possible.

Edward Everett Hale says that, in his experience as a parish minister, he looks back on the work which reading classes have done with him with more satisfaction than on any other organised effort which he has shared for the education of the young. His most important hints for the management of such classes are as follows:

" It seems desirable that a class shall be of such a size that free conversation may be easy. If the number exceeds thirty, the members hardly become intimate with each other, and there is a certain shyness about speaking out in meeting. The size of the room has some effect in this matter.

"I think that in the choice of the subject the range may easily be too large. It seems desirable that the members of the class shall know at the beginning what their winter's work is to be so specifically that they can adjust to it their general readings. Even the choice of novels for relaxation, or the selection of what they will read and what they will not, in newspapers, magazines, and reviews, depends on this first choice of subject. The leader of the class should give a good deal of time to preparation. The more he knows, the better, of course, but all that is absolutely necessary is that he shall keep a little in advance of the class and shall be willing to work and read. A true man or woman will, of course, 'confess ignorance' frankly. I would rather have in a leader good practical knowledge of books of reference and the way to use public libraries than large specific knowledge of the subject in hand. Of course it would be better to have both. And I think a class is wise in leaving to its leader the selection of the topic. Granting these preliminaries, I would urge, and almost insist, that no one should attend the class who would not promise to attend to the end. Nothing is so ruinous as the presence of virgins who have no oil in their vessels, and are in the outer darkness before the course is half done. I think it is well to agree in the beginning on a small fee—a dollar, or half a dollar—which can be expended in books of reference, or supper, or charity, or anything else desirable. The real object of the fee is weeding out unreliable members.

" Every member should have a note-book and pencil, and those who do not take notes should be expelled. What is heard at such classes, with no memorandum to connect it with after-work, goes in at one ear and out at the other.

" To make sure that each member takes notes, it is well to keep one class journal. At the end of each meeting, assign the making up of this journal to some one of the class, selected by accident. The length of this journal should be limited—say to a single page of a writing-book. Otherwise the ambitious members vie with each other in making them long, which is in no way desirable. All you want is the merest brief of the work done at each meeting. . . .

"The leader will very soon get a knowledge of what the different members of the class can and will do. Indeed, the consideration of what they want to do will become an important part of his arrangements. He should remember that they are all volunteers, that it is no business of his to drive up a particular laggard to his work, but rather to make the class as profitable as he can for all."

WHAT BOOKS TO OWN

EVERYBODY ought to own books. My father used to call a house without books a literary Sahara; and how many of them there are! We are a "reading people"; but nothing is easier to find than homes in which the furniture, the pictures, the ornaments, everything, is an object of greater care and expense than the library. Is it any wonder that their inmates, whatever their so-called wealth or comfort, are intellectual starvelings?

One of the best statements concerning books in the house is by Henry Ward Beecher: "We form judgments of men," says he, "from little things about their houses, of which the owner, perhaps, never thinks. In earlier years, when travelling in the West, where taverns were scarce, and in some places unknown, and every settler's house was a house of entertainment, it was a matter of some importance and some experience to select wisely where you should put up. And we always looked for flowers. If there were no trees for shade, no patch of flowers in the yard, we were suspicious of the place. But no matter how rude the cabin or rough the surroundings, if we saw that the window held a little trough for flowers, and that some vines twined about strings let down from the eaves, we were confident that there was some taste and carefulness in the log-cabin. In a new country, where people have to tug for a living, no one will take the trouble to rear flowers unless the love of them is pretty strong; and this taste, blossoming out of plain and uncultivated people, is itself a clump of harebells growing out of the seams of a rock. We were seldom misled. A patch of flowers came to signify kind people, clean beds, and good bread.

"But in other states of society other signs are more significant. Flowers about a rich man's house may signify only that he has a good gardener, or that he has refined neighbours, and does what he sees them do. But men are not accustomed to buy books unless they want them. If on visiting the dwelling of a man in slender means we find that he contents himself with cheap carpets and very plain furniture in order that he may purchase books, he rises at once in our esteem. Books are not made for furniture, but there is nothing else that so beautifully furnishes a house. The plainest row of books that cloth or paper ever covered is more significant of refinement than the most elaborately carved *étagère* or sideboard. Give us a house furnished with books rather than furniture. Both, if you can, but books at any rate. To spend several days in a friend's house, and hunger for something to read, while you are treading on costly carpets and sitting on luxurious chairs, and sleeping upon down, is as if one were bribing your body for the sake of cheating your mind.

"Is it not pitiable to see a man growing rich, augmenting the comforts of home, and lavishing money on ostentatious upholstery, upon the table, upon everything but what the soul needs? We know of many and many a rich man's house where it would not be safe to ask for the commonest English classics. A few garish annuals on the table, a few pictorial monstrosities, together with the stock religious books of his 'persuasion,' and that is all! No poets, no essayists, no historians, no travels or biographies, no select fiction, no curious legendary lore. But the wall paper cost three dollars a roll, and the carpet cost four dollars a yard!

" Books are the windows through which the soul looks out. A home without books is like a room without windows. No man has a right to bring up his children without surrounding them with books, if he has the means to buy them. It is a wrong to his family. He cheats them! Children learn to read by being in the presence of books. The love of knowledge comes with reading and grows upon it. And the love of knowledge in a young mind is almost a warrant against the inferior excitement of passions and vices. Let us pity these poor rich men who live barrenly in great bookless houses! Let us congratulate the poor that, in our day, books are so cheap that a man may every year add a hundred volumes to his library for the price which his tobacco and his beer cost him. Among the earliest ambitions to be excited in clerks, workmen, journeymen, and, indeed, among all that are struggling up in life from nothing to something, is that of owning and constantly adding to a library of good books. A little library growing larger every year is an honourable part of a young man's history. It is a man's duty to have books. A library is not a luxury, but one of the necessaries of life."

In this connection, do you remember Chaucer's *Clerk of Oxenford*, who stinted himself in every other way in order that he might have money to buy books?

> "A Clerk ther was of Oxenford also,
> That unto logik hadde longe i-go.
> Al-so lene was his hors as is a rake,
> And he was not right fat, I undertake.
> But lokede holwe, and therto soburly.
> Ful thredbare was his overest courtepy,
> For he hadde nought geten him yet a benefice.
> Ne was not worthy to haven an office.
> For him was lever have at his beddes heed
> Twenty bookes, clothed in blak and reed,
> Of Aristotil, and of his philosophie
> Than robus riche, or fithul, or sawtrie.
>
> "But al-though he were a philosophre,
> Yet hadde he but litul gold in cofre;
> But al that he might gete, and his frendes sende,
> On bookes and his lernyng he it spende,
> And busily gan for the soules praye,
> Of hem that yaf him wherwith to scolaye.
> Of studie took he moste cure and heede.
> Not oo word spak he more than was neede;
> All that he spak it was of heye prudence,
> And short and quyk, and ful of gret sentence.
> Sownynge in moral manere was his speche,
> And gladly wolde he lerne, and gladly teche."

"To be without books of your own is the abyss of penury; don't endure it!" exclaims Ruskin. Lyman Abbott declares that "the home ought no more to be without a library than without a dining-room and kitchen. If you have but one room, and it is lighted by the great wood fire in the flaming fireplace, as Abraham Lincoln's was, do as Abraham Lincoln did: pick out one corner of your fireplace for a library, and use it." Still another truth is well stated by Sir Arthur Helps in a few words: "A man never gets so much good out of a book as when he possesses it."

The influence of the home library upon all the members of the family, and especially the younger ones, can hardly be overstated. The biographies of literary men, and of great men not literary, are full of testimonies to the value of the neighbourhood and society of books in early youth. "I like books," says Dr. Holmes; "I was born and bred among them." He has told us, in an amusing way, what sort of a library he was "brought up" in; and, great reader though he was, he lamented that he had not read even more: "It was very largely theological, so that I was walled in by solemn folios, making the shelves bend under the loads of sacred learning. Walton's Polygot Bible was one of them. *Polisynopsis* was another; a black letter copy of Fox's *Acts and Monuments* another, and so on. Higher up on the shelves stood Fleury's *Ecclesiastical History*, in twenty-five volumes octavo. In one of these volumes a book-worm had eaten his way straight through from beginning to end, leaving a round hole through every leaf, as if a small shot had gone through it. My father wrote some verses about it, I recollect, beginning: 'See here, my son, what industry can do.' I wish I had profited better by them. I have not been the most indolent of mortals, but the industry of some of my acquaintances . . . makes me feel as if I had been lazy in comparison. I do not remember whether I have told this in any of my books or not; at any rate, the lesson taught by the book-worm and turned into verse by my father is one by which any young person may profit.''

Another contemporary writer, Edmond About, has similarly ascribed his formation of the reading habit to his father's care in collecting a library: ''Reading is assuredly an excellent thing, and my father never would forego it, after he had attained some leisure and affluence. By degrees he had obtained five or six hundred well-chosen volumes. He constantly turned over the leaves of the *Encyclopædia of Useful Knowledge* and

Boret's manuals; he had even subscribed with three or four neighbours to a liberal Paris paper; but he prized far above all the knowledge that he had gained quite alone. Gently and patiently he also accustomed me to look and think for myself, instead of imposing upon me his ideas, which my docile, submissive spirit would have blindly accepted."

In lieu of a thousand similar utterances, perhaps it will be enough to quote what a veteran journalist, Charles T. Congdon, wrote concerning the encouragement of a love and a care for books on the part of children: "I would early encourage in children a reverence for books. The need of it is the greater because school business so tends to raggedness and destruction. And this naturally brings me to a topic which is well worth considering—I mean the care and preservation of books. I have known young people who were highly particular in the conservation of their small libraries; and I think that this is a tendency which it would be well for parents and guardians to encourage. I argue well of a child who carefully conserves its books, covers them, and ranges them on a little shelf in a little row. When I encounter this particularity, I see before me future collectors and bibliographers in embryo.''

Then, after a word on '' the immorality which pervades the ranks of borrowers,'' he speaks of the pleasure children will take hereafter in looking back on books which delighted them when the world was new and small things charming.

I have happened to find some sensible words of the same sort in a country weekly, the very place where such expressions are likely to do most good to the local public: '' Nothing is more important to young people than an early love for good books. In no way can this love be better fostered than by the formation of home libraries. No matter how few or small the books are, to commence with, they will make a beginning, and you will wonder at its growth. Don't have the books scattered about, but collect them. Any boy can make shelves which are good enough, and the very act of getting your books together will form a desire for more. When you have thus made a beginning make it a rule never to add a poor or ' trashy ' book. A good book is worth a hundred of the other kind. In this day of cheap books there is no reason why every boy . . . need not have something of a library.''

Boys may well remember that from such a beginning great results may grow. From no greater a collection than any young reader can easily make, the historian Gibbon tells us that he gradually formed a numerous and select library, "the foundation of my works, and the best comfort of my life, both at home and abroad."

Aside from the reading of books, their mere society and companionship is of high advantage. Boswell tells us that Dr. Johnson thought it well even to look at the backs of books: "No sooner had we made our bow to Mr. Cambridge, in his library, than Johnson ran eagerly to one side of the room, intent on poring over the backs of the books. Sir Joshua [Reynolds] observed, aside, 'He runs to the books as I do the pictures; but I have the advantage, I can see much more of the pictures than he can of the books.' Mr. Cambridge, upon this, politely said: 'Dr. Johnson, I am going, with your pardon, to accuse myself, for I have the same custom which I perceive you have. But it seems odd that we should have such a desire to look at the backs of books.' Johnson, ever ready for contest, instantly started from his reverie, wheeled about, and answered: 'Sir, the reason is very plain. Knowledge is of two kinds.

We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information upon it. When we inquire into any subject, the first thing we have to do is to know what books have treated of it. This leads us to look at catalogues, and the backs of books in libraries.' Sir Joshua observed to me the extraordinary promptitude with which Johnson flew upon an argument. 'Yes,' said I, 'he has no formal preparations, no flourishing with his sword; he is through your body in an instant.' "

People who are accustomed to know where particular books are can fly to them in an emergency; and sometimes a little library at home, well understood, is a more effective armory than a great collection, unknown.

"What a place to be in is an old library!" exclaimed Charles Lamb. One's own library becomes old, for him, as the years go on, and each book is a sort of landmark in the history of his mind. There is the Christmas present given him on his sixth birthday, and there the Kelmscott Chaucer bought with the savings of middle life. The true owner of books loves his books, and they come to have real personalities. When poor Southey, after a life of hard work among books, lost his mind, and even the power to read a word, he spent hours and hours in wandering through his library, feeling his books, and petting them, and laying his head against them.

So Longfellow sang, in his fine sonnet *My Books:*

> "Sadly as some old mediæval knight
>   Gazed at the arms he could no longer wield,
>   The sword two-handed and the shining shield
>   Suspended in the hall, and full in sight,
>   While secret longings for the lost delight
>   Of tourney or adventure in the field
>   Came over him, and tears but half concealed
>   Trembled and fell upon his beard of white,
>   So I behold these books upon their shelf,
>   My ornaments and arms of other days;
>   Not wholly useless, though no longer used,
>   For they remind me of my other self,
>   Younger and stronger, and the pleasant ways
>   In which I walked, now clouded and confused."

It is not necessary to advise buyers to possess this or that particular book, nor to present to them a definite list of ten, fifty, a hundred, or a thousand volumes, and say, "Buy these, and you will have a library." The preceding chapters in this series have sufficiently indicated, I trust, what sort of books one ought to read, and how a selection of books to own may best be guided and limited. Any intelligent person, after a certain amount of experience, can tell, when he reads a catalogue of publications, or visits a book-store, what are standard books, and what are those which are good to read. Everyone's conscience, too, will sooner or later, if wisely developed, tell him what books to shun. Some volumes are to be read for a temporary purpose, and not to be owned. Buy nothing that you are, or will be, ashamed of, and remember that "art is long, and time is fleeting." In a word, choose your books as you would choose your friends and helpers.

The collector of a home library should not be discouraged because there are so many books in the world, and he can buy so few. Says Emerson: " I visit occasionally the Cambridge library, and I can seldom go there without renewing the conviction that the best of it all is already within the four walls of my study at home. The inspection of the catalogue brings me continually back to the few standard writers who are on every private shelf; and to these it can afford only the most slight and casual additions. The crowds and centuries of books are only commentary and elucidation, echoes and weakeners of these few great voices of Time."

In the same strain are these words from an editorial in the *Pall Mall Gazette*, of London: "It is some comfort to reflect that without possessing a library equal to that of the British Museum, and indeed one which can be coaxed into a single room of moderate dimensions, one may have everything in the way of literature which has been so far produced by the human race which is still worth reading—not to say a good deal more. A large collection of English poets, from Chaucer to Cowper, will go upon a small shelf; and all that has since been written of any importance will fail to fill another. Three-fourths even of that collection is of interest only in a historical sense. And truly it suggests melancholy as well as comfort to look round any decent library; to mark the collected works even of the greatest; and to remember how small is the proportion of grain to chaff." My own collection of twenty-five hundred volumes is enough; the outside world may have the rest.

As for the choice of editions of books to own, a remark of Dr. Johnson's is worth remembering, though, of course, not of universal application: "Books that you may carry to the fire, and hold readily in your hand, are the most useful, after all."

The care of the home library should chiefly consist of keeping its contents accessible and neat. Books that are imprisoned, or are kept in unfrequented rooms, are deprived of half their usefulness. It is better to have a book worn out with use, or faded by sunlight, or kept where it needs a daily dusting, than to have it preserved like a stuffed bird in a case. Open shelves are better than glass-doored book-cases, and the original binding of a book is better than a brown-paper cover. Who would like a friend always dressed in a " duster " ? or who would enjoy living in one of those melancholy rooms where all the furniture is shrouded in linen? Brown-paper book-covers may be excusable in public libraries, but never in private ones.

A few hints on the care of books, selected from a paper by S. L. Boardman, will be found serviceable: " Whatever the room chosen for the library, let it be warm and sunny, on the south side of the house if possible, and plainly furnished, for what furnishing so gorgeous and attractive as good books? An open fire is the only means of warming that should ever be thought of in a library room. . . .

" Books have a far more cheerful and social look when you can readily see them, and handle them, and become acquainted with them, than when they are locked up as though you were afraid somebody would read them, or that they would make somebody happy if he could only turn over their magic pages. Open cases, then, for all books in private libraries, especially in what we call 'working libraries.' . . .

"Do not put too much money in expensive and luxuriant bindings. I am not talking to the wealthy bibliophile, who is able to employ Bedford, or Pawson, or Charles White to bind his books regardless of cost, but to the average book-lover or collector. Put the extra money your fine bindings would cost into more, and more serviceable, books, and be happy. Choose editions in plain substantial dress, and leave elaborate gilding, and blind tooling, and silk linings, to your exquisite fancier. . . .

"Books should never be crowded tightly on the shelves. They should be so kindly disposed as to gently support each other. Great injury comes from placing them too closely together. Books are generally taken down from their positions by the top of the back, and in many, many instances I have seen books, some of which were in their day strongly bound, completely broken away at the back from being pulled carelessly out of position. In removing a book from its place the proper way is first to loosen the books standing each side of the one wanted, by giving them a gentle sideward pressure; then, tipping the book from you at the top and taking hold of the bottom, gently draw it out. Do not pile books flatways upon the top of those standing upright in the case. It injures those upon which they rest very much. Remember the advice of old Richard De Bury, centuries ago, 'never to approach a volume with uncleanly hands.' Books are easily soiled, paper and binding retaining the imperfection of the least pressure of unwashed hands. Dust off the books every day, and remember that, like house plants, they need a constant supply of fresh air. They are dear friends. We become attached to them from constant intercourse, and when we remember how much enjoyment we receive from their silent, tender companionship, we should in return treat them well, give them the best room in the house, and teach our children and visitors to pay to them due respect."

I am often asked whether it is better to buy standard authors in complete editions, or favourite selected works. Buy both; let some great writers, most dear to your heart, stand complete on your shelves; for the rest, save your purse and your book-space by picking up whatsoever volumes you will,—so long as they are decently readable, in both senses of the adjective.

Finally, be occasionally extravagant in book-buying. A volume, or a set, that has cost some preliminary planning and subsequent economising may be a lifelong pleasure, from the time when you first began to wonder whether you could afford it until the solemn day in which you bequeath it to some book-lover of the next generation.

THE USE OF PUBLIC LIBRARIES

EVERY town ought to have a library containing as many volumes as the town has inhabitants. Such a library becomes at once the centre of the intellectual life of the town, and affects the morals and manners of the entire community, welcoming all to the benefits of high thought and the friendship of noble minds. And more, its influence stretches out into the whole country, wherever its readers may chance to go. A town with a library can be distinguished easily from one which lacks any such collection of books; and those parts of the country in which public libraries abound are the parts which are most influential in every department of intellectual and even material labour. This great work of library development has dotted all the north-eastern portion of the United States with buildings and influences as truly useful as those of our temples of worship—a development unprecedented in the world's history and unequalled in other parts of this or any other country.

It is true that the greatest libraries of the world are not on this side of the Atlantic. America has, as yet, no collections numerically equalling those of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris or the British Museum in London.

In Europe most books go to great public reference-libraries or large private collections; in America they are far more widely distributed in multiplied smaller libraries for the good of the people. Truly this is the land of readers: a land in which, as I once saw in New York, the very driver of a dump-cart picks a tattered book from the ashes he carries, and reads it as he jolts along. It is for us to see that this reading habit is maintained and purified, and not to allow it to be said that, in the increasing hurry of merely materialistic development, busy men read nothing but sensational dailies, and tired women nothing but ephemeral novels.

The public library, like most good things in the world, must be a growth, an evolution. The idea of growth, and development, and nurture, which is so closely connected with almost everything in the natural and the spiritual world, bears an important relation to collections of books, large or small. A library, whether public or private, should therefore be governed by an intelligent purpose and a watchful discrimination, proportioned to the important and lasting influence which it must inevitably assert, for good or for bad.

It is a mere truism to say that a book may play a conspicuous part in shaping the character of many readers, long after its purchaser shall have forgotten its existence, or shall have departed from this world. The selection of a new book, therefore, ought to be made with thoughtfulness and care, and with a full knowledge of its probable service in the library of which it will be a part. Not every collection of books, however, gives evidence of a dominating principle on the part of those who have gathered it. How many pretentious homes there are in which the books seem the most conspicuous accidents that the house contains! Town libraries are usually chosen with greater care, but even here librarians or purchasing committees are often unduly influenced by a desire to get the newest books, or the greatest number for a given sum of money, or those books which can be chosen in the shortest time. Many custodians or purchasers of books, know what they want and why they want it, but many others squander their money and their influence, and not only fail to attain the desired good, but put a positive evil into its place.

No book should ever be bought without a good reason. If it is to fulfil a temporary use, the reason may be as honest and as imperative as though it were purchased for all time. But whatever may be the circumstances attending its purchase, it should be able to approve the intelligence and wisdom of its purchaser. Fifty books having a why and a wherefore are better than five hundred having no plea to make for themselves. There is no better reason why we should permit chance, or importunity, or lack of time, to tell us what books to buy than to allow them to guide our choice of a church, or a place of residence, or an occupation in life.

The choice of books for public libraries should be made with care, but with a full remembrance of the fact that there are many tastes in the community, and that, while those tastes can and must be raised, they must first be reached. " We suppose," says one authority, "all would agree upon these simple principles—(1) a library must not circulate bad books; (2) it must, within this limit, give the public the books it wants; (3) it must teach it to want better books."

If a sound purpose is the guiding principle in the selection of the separate books which make a library, so also it should govern and shape the uses to which that library is put. It should place one book in the hands of one reader, and give another to another. It should wisely note the proper time for a certain volume to do a particular work, and should not forget to ascertain when that time passes by. It should look both on the long future years and on the present moment, and should train up the library in full remembrance of the fact that new needs and duties come with new times.

In this connection it is well to lay stress upon the duty, in developing a library,—even a public library, which may properly keep many books for possible rather than probable use,—of getting rid of its useless contents. We make mistakes in book-collecting as well as in everything else—indeed, it sometimes seems as though folly in this line were more conspicuous than in most others. Why, then, should we keep in sight and possession our failures in books, any more than in other matters? A bad or superannuated book is no better than an ill-fitting or worn-out shoe, and has no better right to permanence. Some books are pests and plague-spots, and their proper place is in the fire. Others are of no use to us or to anybody else, and may be sent to the rag-man, to be ground up into fresh paper for new service. Others have fulfilled their purpose for us, but if given to new owners would perform fresh and excellent work for readers unfamiliar with their contents. Still others may wisely be sold or exchanged, and thus bring us new lamps for old. Selling books may be as legitimate as buying them. And so, by constantly remembering that a library is something for use; that it is a treasury, and not a tomb, of learning and helpful wisdom; and that it has a life and growth and changing usefulness, and therefore needs our watchful and purposeful care as day after day goes by,—we can greatly increase its possibilities of service, and make it a living force instead of a waning memory.

As regards the service of the library to the community, one should never forget that both sentimental and practical considerations unite in calling upon us to pay attention to the possible working force of books. The attention we bestow upon this consideration shows the value we attach to them.

It is the most important item in the utilisation of books, in public collections or private, in the largest libraries or the smallest, that they should be made accessible. Books out of sight or out of reach of an individual have, for that individual, no value at all; and certainly those others who cannot read books with convenience are not likely to feel that sense of companionship which comes after familiarity with them. Certain restrictions are necessary, wherever books are collected for use, but such restrictions should be reduced to the lowest number. Wherever possible, readers should not only be permitted to handle the particular books they wish to examine with a view to reading, but should also be allowed to browse, so to speak, among the shelves. The advantages of book-using are almost directly proportionate to the accessibility of the volumes. With this in mind, they should be well classified, with a view to the reader's information and convenience. Who has not spent tedious hours of hunting for the desired book, even in the smallest collections? In large public libraries classification is absolutely essential, and its absence reduces the collection to an indistinguishable mass, of whose quality the reader can judge only by specimens taken at haphazard. When the books have been made accessible and wisely classified, their custodian will hardly need to be reminded to see that they are neatly kept, both by himself and by other users. He should bear in mind, however, that dust is not the only enemy to be encountered. Insects, mould, dampness, or the burning of gas are sometimes still more destructive; and it is not safe to leave books upon the shelves without frequent removal and examination.

For all larger public libraries an iron stack, or pile of seven-foot stories, closely filling the interior, is better than a spacious hall, lined with lofty tiers of books, after a fashion now falling into disuse; but the smaller library, with less demands on its room, may properly follow what may be called the hall plan, provided that its shelves—preferably at right angles with the walls—for all frequently used books be not beyond the reach of the hand. In every case, the building should "be sound and dry, the apartments airy and with abundant light"; there should be but one row of books on the shelf; and the classification should be topical, but always for the convenience of the user, and not for the slavish following of the Cutter, Dewey, or other system.

Libraries, like Sabbaths, should be made for men, and not men for libraries. Do not subdivide too minutely, or try to remedy chaos by pettiness.

In the handling of a book by the individual, it is not well to lay down too many minute rules. Its usefulness is always the principal thing to be sought, and its preservation and ordinary treatment are to be made subject to those rules which shall best secure this end. A book is not a fetich or an oracle; and too much fussiness in its care may defeat the very end for which it was made. A library is not a museum of curiosities, but a working force. Some books, to be sure, fulfil their purpose if they are infrequently consulted by a patient scholar working in a remote and comparatively unimportant corner of the field of learning. Manuscripts in the Bodleian or the Vatican would not be put to their best use, but would speedily be destroyed, were they passed from hand to hand in the community at large. Nor does the utility of some old law-book depend upon the frequency with which it is found in readers' hands. But the majority of libraries in this broad land of general readers, and the greater part of the books they contain, are not designed to throw light upon intricate questions, demanding comparison of manuscripts or citation of decisions. The measure of success must be that of the greatest good to the greatest number; and the utility of a library indicates the intelligence with which it is managed.

A great advance has been made in the public libraries of the United States, of late years, in the matter of developing and providing for the tastes of the people. Probably the large libraries are twice as efficient as they were a quarter of a century ago, and the gain has been chiefly due to a better conception of the duties of the librarian. Custodians of libraries do not regard themselves as curators of literary museums, but as professors of books and reading, with an office and work every whit as honourable and influential as that of college professors. Therefore they prepare lists of books on particular topics, and post them up for use of readers, especially at times when the demand is most urgent. Whenever inquiries are made, they answer them fully and courteously, and they not only do this, but court such inquiries, and strive to stimulate a public taste. From time to time they print bulletins, or prepare readers' hand-books or otherwise inform the public concerning the resources and work of the library. Printed or written lists should, of course, be used simply as means toward ends. The needs and tastes of communities vary, and the aim of the custodians of libraries should be to provide for the gratification of proper reading-habits, and also to develop those habits and raise the public taste. Lists of accessions should be posted and kept fresh; titles of more important books should be accompanied by brief characterisations; leading political and literary events should quickly be followed by helpful topical summaries, and by free and stimulating conversation, as far as may be, with those seeking, or even unconsciously in need of, aid. The public, too, should be taught the wise use of the printed or written catalogue, and of the best bibliographies. All this labour is as essential to the smallest library, in proportion to its size, as it is to the largest. There is no more sense in saying that a little collection of books should not be worked to its utmost, than in declaring that a mission church, or a pioneer community, should be left to grow as best it may, without any intellectual supervision and stimulating suggestion.

The place and work of the public library must accordingly depend upon the intelligent foresight and the enthusiastic interest of custodians and users alike. All are on the same footing in the republic of books; but no republic can long be left to take care of itself without forethought and work on the part of its members and friends.

Modern readers do not agree with Sir Anthony Absolute that "a circulating library in a town is an evergreen tree of diabolical knowledge." To us it seems like the large and ever-burning torch to whose generous flame we can carry our lesser lamps whenever we would light them anew. I can sincerely say that I owe more to the library of my native town (in my boyhood containing perhaps four thousand volumes) than to my entire college course. The college gives much, but the library gives the start.

The greatest work of the public library is double: to benefit those who know and love books, and to reach into the byways and hedges for those whose tastes and capacities are to be discovered and developed. Our great-grandfathers had their *Gradus ad Parnassum;* nor can their descendants violate the law that nature does nothing by leaps. The youthful mind, or the adult mind not hitherto accustomed to the use of available intellectual wealth, develops its taste step by step: by the picture-paper, the magazine, the juvenile story, the historical novel, the biography, or the book of history. In this upward march even the daily paper has its place; contemporary reading is not necessarily superficial reading. As Edward Freeman said: "History is past politics, and politics is present history." After these comes true and artistic literature, as represented in books of poetry and the higher prose. The two great blessings of life are ethics and art, and of the arts literature is the most widely beneficial.

Horace Greeley once said that he wanted but three books at his elbow: a dictionary, an atlas, and a cyclopædia. All three, in manifold forms, does the public library provide; but it also leads through the material to the imaginative; to books that deal with "the consecration and the poet's dream," with that beauty which "is its own excuse for being," with the literature of things "out of space, out of time," that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard." We begin with the easy and the practical, and end—no, we can never end—with the struggle for ultimate perfection.

The library is the centre to which we turn; the radius from which benefits go. For this reason there should be an intimate and unceasing connection between it and the public schools. The teacher, aided by the library, should seek to induce the pupil to follow the natural way, and look for the best models of style to be found in the writing of the best authors. Teach him to read first, and then teach him to write with such naturalness and skill as he can command. Keep his standard of reading high; he needs *literary* reading as a first requisite—masterpieces of great authors, to which, indeed, bright children turn with an instinctive recognition of the good. Thus is a genuine love of books developed at the start; and it should never be forgotten that seldom indeed is the reading habit formed after the age of childhood.

In training up a library, therefore, and in making it work, we must proceed and progress. An English essayist has told us that the only man he envies when he is reading a good book is the man who is reading a better one. By such procedure we learn to get not only information, but wisdom; and out of the riff-raff of multiplying books that are not books we select and assimilate the few that we really make part of our lives and characters.

All literature (like all Gaul) may be divided into three parts; good books, pretty good books, and bad books. The first class is valuable, the second superfluous, and the third detestable. And yet, though pretty good books may be superfluous in the eyes of those who read the best, let us not forget that the vast majority of men and women read little, while a large minority of those who do read cannot assimilate the very best, save in discreetly administered portions. How many of us, indeed, like to take our "classics" in large instalments? But if we remember the old Latin motto, *Optimum elige: suave et facile illud faciet consuetudo,*—"Choose the best: habit will make it pleasant and easy,"—we can find books that, as Cicero said, we wish to carry with us by day and by night, and would transport as our prime favourites, if we could, to that "desert island" of which we sometimes dream as the real test of our literary likes and dislikes. There are volumes which nourish us and bring us to a new life, broader and brighter than Dante's; and there are volumes that are slow poison, or we may almost say, instant moral death. Let us study those historians who broadly show us how "through the ages one increasing purpose runs." Let us learn from those essayists who emphasise individual manliness of character and true spiritual development. Let us familiarise ourselves with that ideal true poetry which, like Shelley's skylark,

> "Singing, still dost soar,
> And soaring, ever singest."

If we study biography, let it be of true men and by true men; if books of travel let them instruct as well as amuse. If we follow the great current of fiction let us shun the books of an hour, especially the superficial tales of purposeless people and pointless talk, turned out semi-annually by "realists" who are too blind to see that truth and beauty are one, and that the ideal is more real than Piccadilly or a Boston boarding-house. There is fiction and fiction. Let us never waste time over trash if we have not read *Ivanhoe* or such a short story as Hawthorne's *Ethan Brand*, uniting the narrative element with the ethical.

Thus far I have spoken of the American circulating library of books for the people. As between the library for circulation and the library for reference, however, there need be no rivalry. Each has its necessary place, and most collections of books must serve both purposes. As scholarship increases, the research library must greatly develop. Says Mr. Herbert Putnam, the Librarian of Congress:

"Almost all accounts of recent library progress are of the progress on the popular side. It is to this chiefly that the attention of the public has been directed, and it is to this that enthusiasm has been invited. But there has been a steady, if less spectacular, progress on the other side which concerns the serious investigator. It has consisted in the improvement, if not in the multiplication, of research libraries; in the increase of their collections; and in more liberal facilities for their use—particularly through interlibrary loans. The advances toward a higher as well as broader service on the part of the National Library have been significant; but the advance has been general. To note only one feature of it—there has been a large increase in special collections for investigation and research in the material made available in free libraries.

"Such additions as these to libraries where they will be liberally administered give assurance that the recent progress in American libraries is not merely toward the popularisation of literature. They show that, while it is in one direction a zeal for the diffusion of knowledge, it is also, in another, an increasing effort toward the advancement of learning." [1]

The books gathered within the walls of a library are chiefly, indeed only, valuable as they are transmuted into the life of the community. "Character, character," were the last words I ever heard from the lips of Phillips Brooks when, on his final earthly New Year's day, he adjured the young men of Boston to high endeavour toward making existence mean something. The creation of joyous and beautiful character is the ultimate result of true art, literary or other. Printed books will outlast us, yet they too will sometime perish. Some part of their contents, however, it is sober truth to say, may be made to pass beyond the visible world when turned into that mental and spiritual life of the individual which we believe to be in its nature indestructible.

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[1] *The World's Work*, July, 1905.

THE TRUE SERVICE OF READING

THE true service of reading is something more than to afford amusement for an idle hour. Most readers will admit this, although their practice is too often opposed to the principle whose theoretical correctness they readily accept. And it is also to be remembered that the proper end to be sought in reading is something far more than mere acquirement of knowledge, or attainment of individual culture. A wise or a highly cultured person may be one who has missed the genuine good of reading, quite as effectually as though he were ignorant and uncultured. The end and aim of all reading should be the proper development of a true and highly personal character, and the utilising of one's own acquirements in the work of making other men nobler and better than they now are.

In this end and aim unwise writers and readers manifestly have no share. "Literature," says President Porter, "must respect ethical truth, if it is to reach its highest achievements or attain that place in the admiration and love of the human race which we call fame. The literature which does not respect ethical truth ordinarily survives as literature but a single generation." But literature which does respect ethical truth is that which survives through the centuries, and which plays its part in the betterment of the world long after the whole face of civilisation has changed. He who recognises literature of this class, and takes it to his heart, with the resolve to use it as a trust rather than a selfishly-hoarded possession, gets the greatest benefit for himself, and brings the greatest advantage to others.

The sense of the preciousness and the perpetuity of good books, in their influence on the world through the ages, is one which very many writers have expressed in words of reverence. Keats exclaims, in one of his glowing lyrics:

> "Bards of passion and of mirth,
> Ye have left your souls on earth!
> Have ye souls in heaven too,
> Double-lived in regions new? . . .
> Thus ye live on high, and then
> On the earth ye live again;
> And the souls ye left behind you
> Teach us, here, the way to find you,
> Where your other souls are joying,
> Never slumber'd, never cloying.
> Here, your earth-born souls will speak
> To mortals, of their little week;

Of their sorrows and delights;
Of their passions and their spites;
Of their glory and their shame;
What doth strengthen and what maim.
Thus ye teach us, every day,
Wisdom, though fled far away.
Bards of passion and of mirth,
Ye have left your souls on earth!
Ye have souls in heaven too,
Double-lived in regions new!"

"Of all the things which man can do or make here below, by far the most momentous, wonderful and worthy, are the things we call books," says Carlyle. And again Carlyle declares: "Certainly the art of writing is the most miraculous of all things man has devised. Odin's runes were the first form of the work of a hero; books, written words, are still miraculous runes, the latest form! In books lies the soul of the whole past time; the articulate, audible voice of the past, when the body and material substance of it has altogether vanished like a dream. Mighty fleets and armies, harbours and arsenals, vast cities, high-domed, many-engined — they are precious, great: but what do they become? Agamemnon, the many Agamemnons, Pericleses, and their Greece, all is gone now to some ruined fragments, dumb, mournful wrecks and blocks; but the books of

Greece! There Greece, to every thinker, still very literally lives; can be called up again into life. No magic rune is stranger than a book. All that mankind has done, thought, gained, or been: it is lying in magic preservation in the pages of books. They are the chosen possession of men."

In *The Spectator* is this eloquent passage by Addison: "As the Supreme Being has expressed, and as it were printed, his ideas in the creation, men express their ideas in books, which by this great invention of these latter ages may last as long as the sun and moon, and perish only in the general wreck of nature. . . . There is no other method of fixing those thoughts which arise and disappear in the mind of man, and transmitting them to the last periods of time; no other method of giving a permanency to our ideas, and preserving the knowledge of any particular person, when his body is mixed with the common mass of matter, and his soul retired into the world of spirits. Books are the legacies that a great genius leaves to mankind, which are delivered down from generation to generation, as presents to the posterity of those who are yet unborn."

Herrick wrote to a friend whom he had commemorated in verse:

> "Looke in my booke, and herein see
> Life endless sign'd to thee and me;
> We o're the tombes and fates shall flye,
> While other generations die."

And Spenser sung in stately lines:

> "For deeds doe die, however noblie donne,
> And thoughts of men do as themselves decay;
> But wise wordes, taught in numbers for to runne,
> Recorded by the Muses, live for ay;
> Ne may with storming showers be washt away,
> Ne bitter-breathing windes with harmfull blast,
> Nor age, nor envie, shall them ever wast."

Milton said in his noble *Areopagitica* (or plea for the freedom of the press): "Books are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a potency of life in them to be as active as that soul was whose progeny they are: nay, they do preserve as in a vial the purest efficacy and extraction of that living intellect that bred them. I know they are as lively, and as vigorously productive as those fabulous dragon's teeth; and being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men. And yet on the other hand, unless wariness be used, as good almost kill a man as kill a good book; who kills a man kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book, kills reason itself, kills the image of God as it were in the eye. Many a man lives a burden to the earth; but a good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life. . . . We should be wary, therefore, what persecution we raise against the living labours of public men, how we spill that seasoned life of man preserved and stored up in books; since we see a kind of homicide may be thus committed, sometimes a martyrdom; and if it extend to the whole impression, a kind of massacre, whereof the execution ends not in the slaying of an elemental life, but strikes at that ethereal and fifth essence, the breath of reason itself; slays an immortality rather than a life."

Richard Baxter thought the written word more powerful than the spoken one: "Because God hath made the excellent, holy writings of his servants the singular blessing of this land and age; and many an one may have a good book, even any day or hour of the week, that cannot at all have a good preacher; I advise all God's servants to be thankful for so great a mercy, and to make use of it, and be much in reading; for reading with most doth more conduce to knowledge than hearing doth, because you may choose what subjects and the most excellent treatises you please; and may be often at it, and may peruse again and again what you forget, and may take time as you go to fix it on your mind; and with very many it doth more than hearing also to move the heart."

Coleridge compares books to fruit-trees: "It is saying less than the truth to affirm that an excellent book (and the remark holds almost equally good of a Raphael as of a Milton) is like a well-chosen and well-tended fruit-tree. Its fruits are not of one season only. With the due and natural intervals, we may recur to it year after year, and it will supply the same nourishment and the same gratification, if only we ourselves return to it with the same healthful appetite."

James Freeman Clarke closes an excellent chapter on reading with these grave words: "Let us thank God for books. When I consider what some books have done for the world, and what they are doing, how they keep up our hope, awaken new courage and faith, soothe pain, give an ideal life to those whose homes are hard and cold, bind together distant ages and foreign lands, create new worlds of beauty, bring down truths from heaven — I give eternal blessings for this gift, and pray that we may use it aright, and abuse it never."

Is it any wonder, then, that John Lyly gave his son this advice: "My good son, thou art to receive by my death, wealth, and by my counsel, wisdom, and I would thou wert as willing to imprint the one in thy heart, as thou wilt be ready to bear the other in thy purse: to be rich is the gift of fortune, to be wise the grace of God. Have more mind on thy books, than thy bags, more desire of godliness than gold, greater affection to die well, than to live wantonly."

"Books are the best of things, well used," says Emerson; "abused, among the worst. What is the right use? What is the one end which all means go to effect? They are for nothing but to inspire."

In a word, every reader may well bear upon his heart, as his guide toward right reading, that motto which one sometimes sees deeply cut in the walls of old churches: *Ad majorem Dei gloriam*, —"For the greater glory of God."

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SUGGESTIONS FOR LIBRARIES

Bibliographies are generally so extensive and so elaborate as to be formidable and puzzling to most persons seeking assistance in making up a library. The ordinary publishers' catalogues are often still more puzzling. This little bibliography comprises a series of lists which will be found of practical use to any one wishing to select a library of moderate compass.

These lists have been carefully made up with the view of noting such standard books as should be comprised in any adequate private library.

They are also believed to include the books best suited to form the basis of a town Public Library.

The prices are the publishers' catalogue prices for the best current editions in cloth bindings, except when otherwise specified. Reductions from these prices can be expected when a considerable purchase is made.

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B. *Selected List of Forty-two Essential Reference Books. Page 25*

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6. Primitive Society.
7. Ancient History: General Works.

8–24. Individual Countries.

D. *Biography. Pages 79 to 113*

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G. *Collected Works of Standard Authors. Page 144*

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9. Poetical Anthologies.
10. Books of Quotations.
11. Literary Reference.
12. Bibliography.
13. Miscellaneous.

** Changes and substitutions are occasionally advisable, on account of the issue of new important works.

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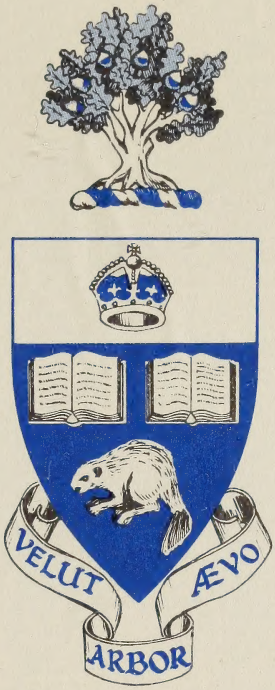
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